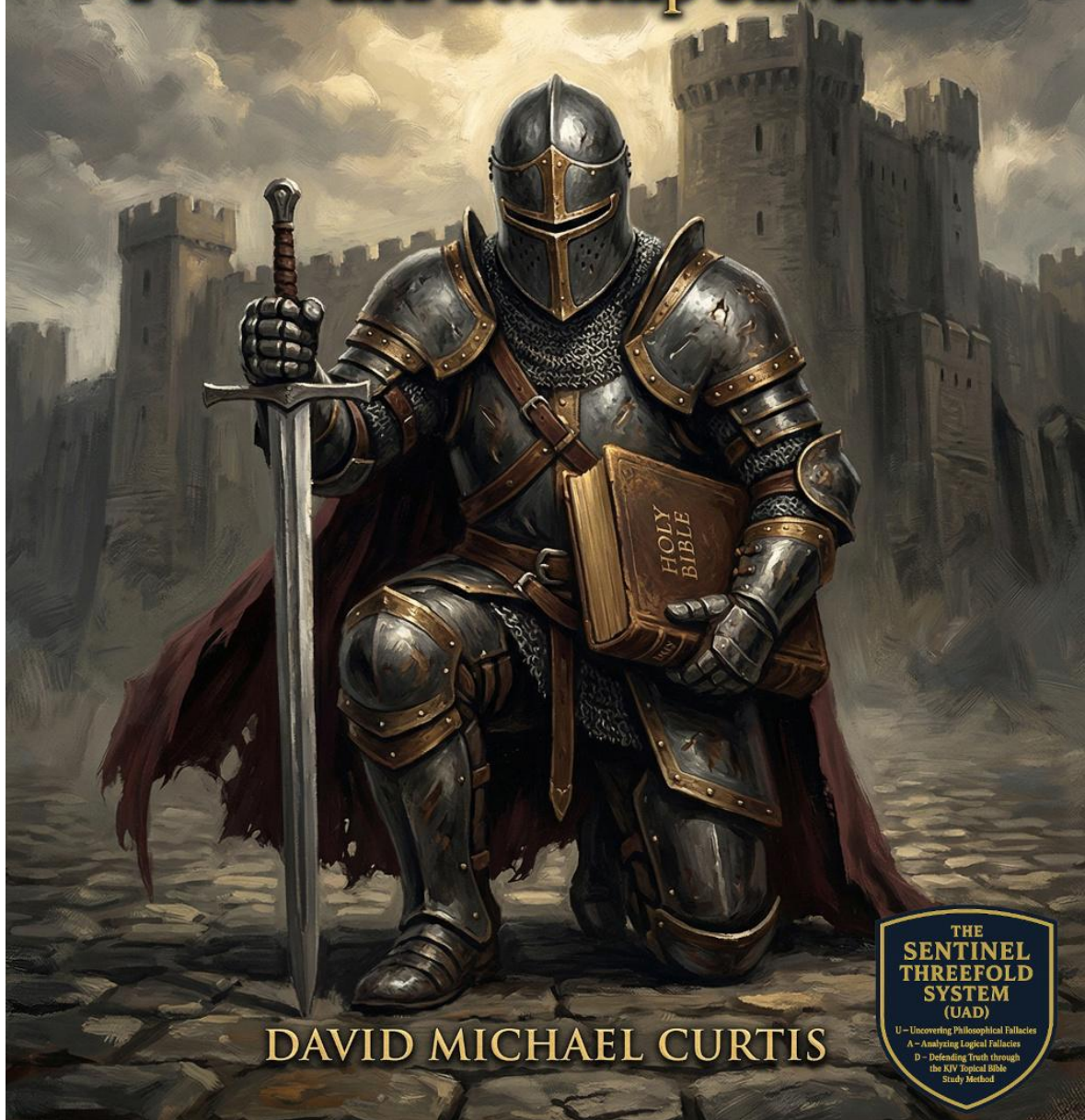


KJV vs. Augustine, Calvin & MacArthur:

A Scriptural Refutation of TULIP and Lordship Salvation



DAVID MICHAEL CURTIS

THE
SENTINEL
THREEFOLD
SYSTEM
(UAD)

U – Uncovering Philosophical Fallacies
A – Analyzing Logical Fallacies
D – Defending Truth through
the KJV Topical Bible
Study Method

KJV vs. Augustine, Calvin & MacArthur:

A Scriptural Refutation of TULIP and Lordship Salvation

by David Michael Curtis

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A Note to the Reader Regarding the Second Edition: To make the Sentinel GPT series easier to navigate, the foundational content previously included in all 52 books has been removed from this specific edition. That shared material has been consolidated into a standalone volume: [The Loud Cry: Babylon is Fallen, Come Out of Her My People](#), which I highly recommend reading at least once. By moving that material, this newly updated edition makes room for fresh, targeted sections designed to significantly sharpen the book's focus.

About the Author

Amazon.com Author Page ([CLICK HERE](#)) :
Audible.com Audiobook Library ([CLICK HERE](#)) :

David Michael Curtis has spent decades building one of the largest interconnected independent Christian libraries in modern publishing. His work spans theology, biblical fiction, history, constitutional studies, marriage, and health, with more than one hundred and forty published books across Kindle and Audible.

Rooted in intensive topical study of the King James Bible, his writing is built upon a unified framework designed to examine Scripture through direct verse comparison rather than denominational tradition. His theological works and novels operate together as one connected body of material, carrying readers from systematic Bible study into fictional narratives that explore faith, persecution, culture, and discipleship across both ancient and modern worlds.

Through this lifelong project, David's goal has remained consistent: to create books that challenge readers to examine the Scriptures carefully, think deeply about their faith, and follow the biblical text wherever it leads.

Mr. David Michael Curtis's theological and nonfiction works on Kindle and Audible include:

- [**The Topical Bible Studies \(KJV\) Encyclopedia \(10 Volumes\)**](#)
- [**The Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost Series \(4 Books\)**](#)
- [**Jesus Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King Series \(5 Books\)**](#)
- [**The KJV vs. Institutional Churches Series \(18 Books\)**](#)
- [**The Eschatology \(End Times\) Series \(11 Books\)**](#)
- [**The Foundations of the Faith Series \(8 Books\)**](#)
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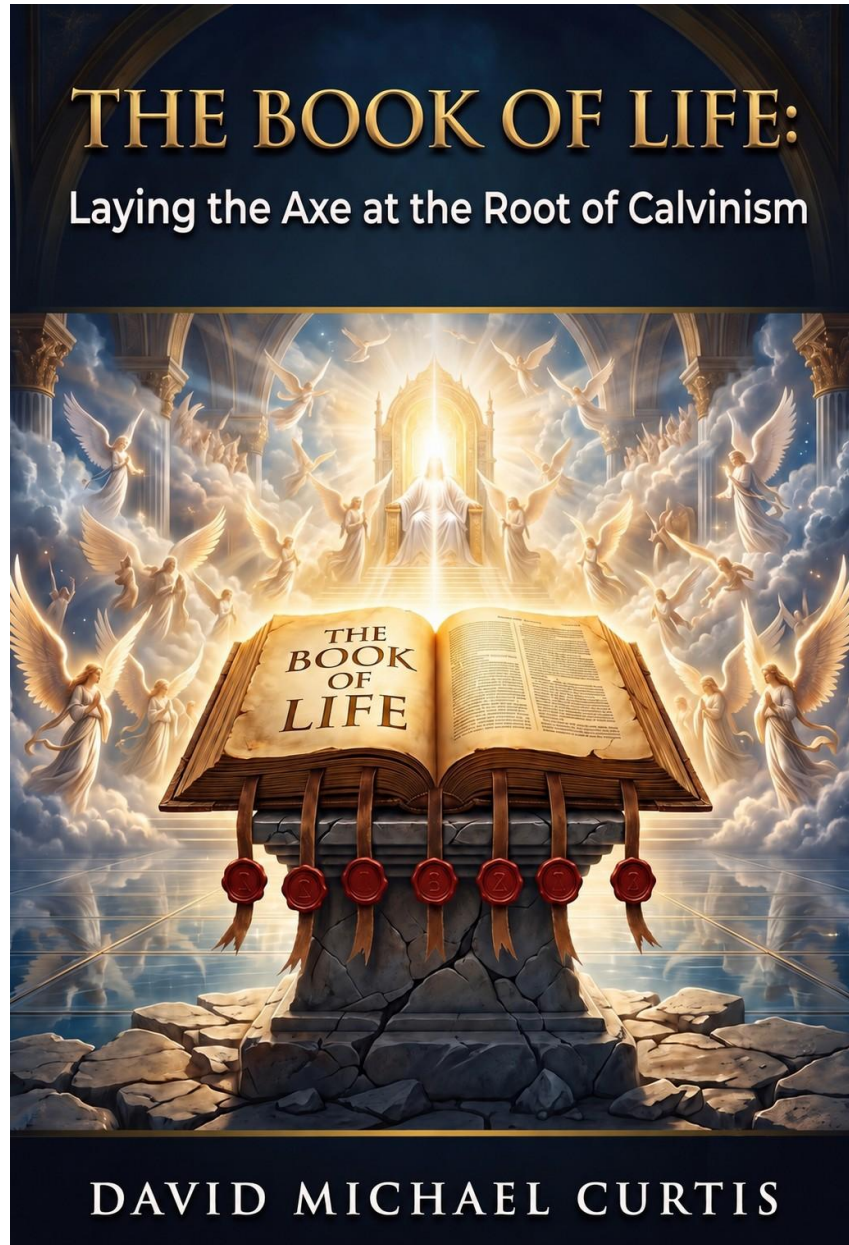
In addition to these studies, his published fiction catalog includes:

- [**The 1st Century House Churches Saga \(13 Novels\)**](#)
- [**The 21st Century House Churches Series \(13 Novels\)**](#)
- [**The Called-Out House Church Theological Thriller Series \(8 Novels\)**](#)
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The Book of Life:

Laying the Axe at the Root of Calvinism

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The Universal Offer:

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(A THEOLOGICAL THRILLER BASED ON THIS BOOK)

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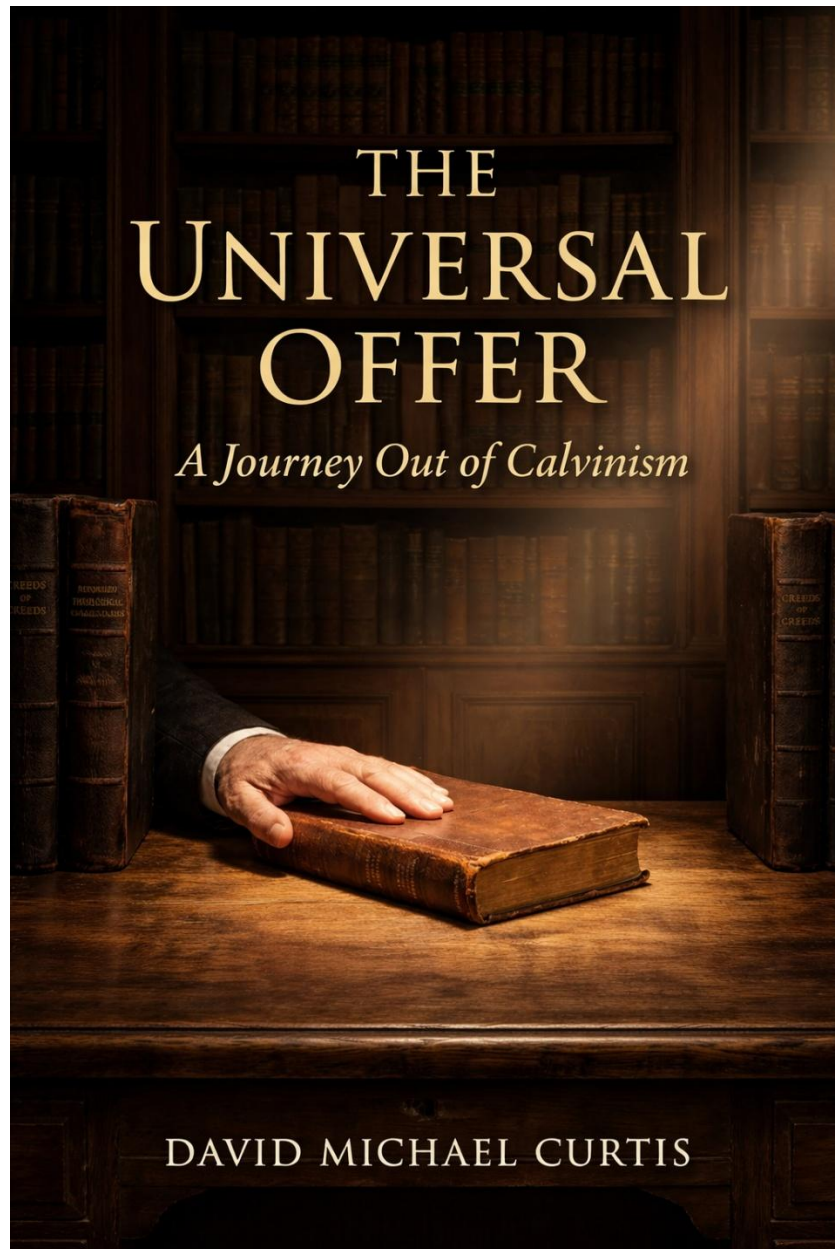


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Introduction



The Plowboy's Promise

William Tyndale was the instrument used by God to forge the English Bible. He was a master linguist, fluent in a multitude of ancient and dead languages, yet he refused to hoard this treasure for his academic peers. Because he dared to translate the scriptures into the common tongue, he was hunted by religious authorities across Europe, locked in a cold prison cell for eighteen months, and ultimately burned at the stake. He sacrificed his blood to break the monopoly of an institutional church that sought to keep the common man dependent on the priesthood. Tyndale consumed his own life to ensure the path to God remained visible to every eye.

This vision for total accessibility crystallized during a heated dispute with a titled doctor of the church. In that defining moment, Tyndale vowed that if God spared his life, he would cause a boy driving the plow to know more of the scripture than the priests themselves. Notice the precise nature of the promise. Tyndale did not vow to teach the farm boy Greek or Hebrew syntax; he promised to give the boy the scripture in his native tongue. Tyndale understood a fundamental reality: with a finished English translation in hand, the working man would never need dead languages to possess the full counsel of God.

It is the difference between a scholar studying the chemical formula of bread, and a hungry man who simply eats the loaf and lives. A scholar can map the exact proteins and carbohydrates of wheat upon a chalkboard, yet still starve to death. The plowboy eats the bread, gains strength, and goes to work in the field.

Centuries later, the quiet proof of Tyndale's wager still walks the earth. Consider a mind shaped by merely a sixth-grade education—a background the academic world naturally discards as unlearned and irrelevant. Yet, simple, relentless engagement with the open pages of the English Bible has allowed that same humble background to produce dozens of written works that challenge conventional worldly wisdom. It is not natural intellect that unlocks the text, but the Spirit of truth witnessing through the text itself. It quietly proves that a humble believer needs no university degree to handle the word of God.

This does not mean every teacher is dishonest or that every academic tool is entirely useless. Many sincere men have labored intensely to help others understand the Bible. But sincerity does not guarantee accuracy, and even well-meaning systems can quietly place blinders on the human eye.

The Echo Chamber

Today, any believer with enough money can purchase a massive digital library for any major denomination from the leading Bible software companies. For a few thousand dollars, a student instantly possesses hundreds of books, a highly curated set of lexicons, Greek dictionaries, and endless commentaries.

By simply selecting a specific theological tradition, that digital library becomes an immediate echo chamber. It creates a kind of tunnel vision, entirely shaped by a denomination's established systematic theology. The library reinforces the exact same core ideas, written by credentialed men who earned their degrees from universities teaching those exact perspectives. A man will have

endless sources to quote, providing his sermons or debates with heavy academic weight. Yet, if he purchases a different library from a rival denomination, he can present the exact opposite theology with the very same level of scholarly backing.

In practice, a doctrinal system is easily supported when the sources used are already heavily aligned with its conclusions. Both sides of the theological aisle possess an impenetrable wall of scholarly backing. Both sides boast impressive names, trusted lexicons, deep Greek definitions, and long strings of initials after their names.

Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther stood at the Diet of Worms and pointed out that these different councils of men "have often erred and contradicted themselves." He bound his conscience only to the plain Word of God. That same reality remains true today. Opposing sides teach the exact same rules of interpretation and use a similar scientific method to dissect the Bible—commonly called expository preaching—yet they arrive at completely contradictory conclusions. When the identical academic method consistently produces opposite truths, the method itself can no longer be trusted as the final authority.

The issue is not the intelligence or the sincerity of the men using these tools. The issue lies in the limits of the method itself. Education is not the enemy, but darkness falls the moment education replaces direct, unfiltered engagement with the text.

The Arithmetic of Harmony

To step outside the echo chamber, a student must return to a foundation built purely on the plain English text. The journey of a true topical student often begins in obscurity. In 1993, one such nineteen-year-old student began a relentless pursuit of the truth using only a *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. For six years, he studied by forcefully flipping back and forth through the pages of physical scripture. The work was so intense that he wore out the bindings of eleven leather-bound Bibles, averaging a ruined, torn spine every six to nine months. Eventually, it required seven layers of duct tape just to hold the final book together long enough to keep reading.

Later years brought the transition to simple software, accelerating the ability to move between verses without destroying physical pages. Yet even with modern technology, the workspace must remain intentionally sparse. The tools of the trade are strict: the King James Bible, *Nave's Topical Bible*, the *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*, *Strong's Concordance*, and *Torrey's Topical Textbook*. There are no tabs open to modern commentaries. There are no theological dictionaries carrying the heavy slant of their respective denominations. By leaving the opinions of men out of the room, the student stays clear of the echo chamber and lets the text speak for itself.

This approach rests entirely on finding textual harmony. It begins with reading entire books of the Bible—such as Romans, Galatians, or Hebrews—from start to finish in a single sitting. But reading straight through is only the first step. When studying a book like Romans, the text must be broken down into as many major topics as possible. Every verse related to a specific topic is gathered, and the verses are read together until their shared meaning becomes clear and consistent.

This method is vital when reading the Apostle Paul. Many readers struggle to track his logic, but his writings become much easier to follow once his rhythm is recognized. Paul frequently packs several distinct, three-to-seven-word phrases into a single verse. The original Greek manuscripts did not contain the modern periods, commas, or verse divisions we rely on today. Because later men added the punctuation, readers blindly assume the phrasing is perfectly structured. Instead of reading a verse as one long, unbroken thought, it must be viewed as several distinct ideas packed tightly together. When studied topically—gathering everything Paul said on a single subject like faith or the law—his actual message clears like fog lifting off a road.

The guiding principle is absolute: *never build a doctrine on an isolated phrase*. Gather everything the Scripture says on the matter, and let the whole truth establish the doctrine.

Once a topic is exhausted within a single book, the scope expands to all of Paul's writings. This multiplies the number of verses, yet the standard remains unchanged: every verse must harmonize. From there, the study expands again to include the four Gospels, bringing the student face-to-face with the central doctrinal questions of the human condition.

Do we actually keep all of His commandments? Are we infused with a grace that helps us live as flawlessly as the Father in heaven, or are we simply counted as righteous through faith? Is Jesus the only man in history to perfectly keep the law, with His absolute obedience credited to our account? Or must we be infused with righteousness, striving to achieve that perfect obedience ourselves? This core divide—imputed versus infused righteousness—was the very earthquake that ignited the Reformation.

The Tumblers of the Lock

Students at Bible universities spend years learning a method of interpretation called hermeneutics. While there is no harm in the academic study of the text, the way it is widely practiced falls drastically short. It fails because the most critical rule of interpretation is usually missing: *gather every verse in the Bible on a given topic before reaching a conclusion*.

In standard practice, hermeneutics often begins with a single verse instead of the full set of verses on a topic. To understand the danger of this, imagine a combination lock on a heavy steel vault. If a lock has only one tumbler, a thief has a one-in-ten chance of guessing the combination and cracking the safe. But true topical Bible study requires aligning every verse on a subject—sometimes forty or more. If you face a combination lock with forty tumblers, the mathematical odds of unlocking it by accident become astronomical.

If a method is missing those forty tumblers and is instead built entirely on isolating a single verse, the lock remains firmly closed. No matter how much a scholar dissects that one verse using historical context, cultural background, or linguistic roots, he is still working with a single tumbler. He may speak with fierce authority, but the vault remains shut.

This is the fatal flaw of modern expository teaching. The standard method is to read one verse in isolation, after which the congregation closes their Bibles to listen to a forty-five-minute message. The theologian uses hermeneutics to interpret that single verse while it sits entirely separated from

the rest of Scripture. This is exactly why ten theologians from ten different denominations can sit in a single room, use the exact same hermeneutical rules, and teach ten completely different things. They are all staring at the same single tumbler, but turning it in different directions based on the traditions of their fathers. Only when every verse on the topic is aligned do the tumblers finally click into place.

Word studies suffer from the same isolation. A student might consult a Greek dictionary as a starting point, but resting on those definitions as final authority is a trap. The secular Romans and Greeks of the first century used the exact same words found in the New Testament, but relying on how the ancient, pagan world defined those words is entirely insufficient. Jesus and the apostles took the common Greek of the Mediterranean and infused it with a distinct, kingdom-level meaning.

If a theology is built using standard Roman definitions, it will inevitably mutate into a different religion than the one Jesus taught. The true method is to look up the definition, lay the dictionary on the shelf, and walk away. The student must then trace how Paul used that exact word across all his epistles, and how Jesus used it in the Gospels. Context, not a secular dictionary, defines the truth.

Topical study is an order of operations. It is a form of spiritual arithmetic. When gathering forty verses on the subject of faith, a student will find both positive commands and negative constraints. Some verses will say “believe.” Others will demand “obey.” The method is simply to add the positive statements and subtract the negative constraints. When read together without denominational pressure, they do not contradict; they explain each other. The text harmonizes from the simplest statements to the most complex.

Running the Gauntlet

This method of independence scales outward into a vast library of fifty-two volumes, easily identified by a distinct mark: a medieval knight holding a Bible and a sword. Because the resources used carry no commentary and no denominational bias, the student is not beholden to what a church father wrote or what a modern personality demands. There is no reason to remain dependent on a curated academic circle when the tools to find the truth are already available.

Navigating this library is designed to be a steady, unburdened journey. The architecture of the series is built to guide a reader through one hundred summary answers in approximately ninety minutes. As the foundation is laid, the student simply notes the number of any question that challenges the conscience. From the summaries in Part I, the reader can move directly to the Comprehensive Answers in Part II for a deeper dive. The subsequent sections offer Fireside Chats that bring doctrine to life through narrative, Topical Bible Studies that show the verses harmonizing in real-time, and a Defense section to address common objections.

By committing just two hours a week, a devoted reader can complete all fifty-two volumes in a single year. Through Kindle Unlimited and Audible Plus, this truth remains accessible to the average family without the crushing weight of heavy retail charges. It provides a practical education in the plain English text that easily rivals a traditional university degree.

Elite scholars will continue to boast of their advanced degrees and their mastery of ancient Greek. Yet, they will quickly find themselves outpaced by anyone who faithfully applies this simple method. Because Tyndale finished the exhausting work centuries ago, the modern reader does not need to dig through the dirt of dead languages to uncover the gold. He already holds the minted coin in his hand. While the academic expert obsessively dissects the text, the believing man simply consumes the plain English Bible as his daily bread. The scholar is left holding an empty formula, while the humble plowboy is fed, strengthened, and ready for the field.

Ephesians 6:13-18 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

The question is now simple: will you test this for yourself, or remain where you are?



The Mechanics of Spiritual Alignment

When a vehicle first rolls off the assembly line, the wheels rest in perfect harmony. The chassis is balanced, and the steering column is calibrated to travel in a straight line without effort. But as a driver navigates the fractured asphalt of the world, the machine takes a beating. It hits potholes, strikes hidden curbs, and endures the relentless friction of the journey. Slowly, imperceptibly at first, the alignment begins to shift.

The driver may not notice the change immediately. Soon, however, the steering wheel begins to fight the hands that hold it. If the grip relaxes for even a fraction of a second, the car pulls sharply to the right or drifts lazily to the left. Instead of holding the clear path set before it, the heavy machinery seeks the ditch.

When the New Testament first emerged, it arrived during a volatile era. Just before the destruction of Jerusalem, the absolute foundation of the faith was laid in stone and blood. As apostles like Paul and Peter faced their impending martyrdoms, they did not leave behind a rough draft or an experimental prototype. They drafted a final will and testament for the early believers. The house church model inherited through their letters was a finished mechanism, calibrated by the Holy Spirit to navigate the worst storms of human history.

This original model drove down the straight and narrow way with flawless alignment. There was no need for the massive institutional structures, the dense academic jargon, or the professional religious class that dominates the modern stage. The apostles left behind a system that was lean, durable, and built for survival in an empire completely hostile to the truth. It was a blueprint designed for common people. They gathered in simple, lamp-lit homes, read the letters for exactly what the ink said, and walked in the power of the Spirit without the interference of a middleman.

The calibration of that first-century model rested entirely on the absolute authority of the Word, rather than the dictates of a centralized religious headquarters. Facing imminent persecution and the threat of the sword, early believers had to be completely self-sufficient in their grasp of the scriptures. They could not wait for a peer-reviewed academic journal to explain the Epistle to the Romans. They had to internalize the text, harmonize its commands, and live it out daily. That perfect alignment allowed the early church to thrive even as the institutional world crumbled to ash around them, proving that the plain word of God is all a devoted heart ever requires.

However, the current state of modern Christianity looks vastly different. Through centuries of accumulated tradition, worldly philosophy, and the hidden potholes of false doctrine, the collective body of believers has lost its alignment. The modern church no longer drives straight. It pulls hard to the right, steering toward the ditch of legalism—a rigid, breathless system where men attempt to earn divine favor through strict rule-keeping. Alternatively, it drifts to the left, sliding toward the muddy ditch of emotionalism and constant compromise, where fleeting feelings dictate the boundaries of faith.

To stay on the road today, the modern believer must fight the wheel constantly, exhausted by the sheer effort it takes just to walk with God. What is required now is not a new vehicle, nor a newly paved road, but a total realignment with the Scripture. The wheels of faith must be brought back

into harmony with the blueprint of the Master Manufacturer. The mandate remains unchanged: *“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”* (Matthew 7:14).

The Wreckage of the Ditch

When spiritual wheels fall out of alignment, the destination is always a ditch. It makes no difference whether a driver crashes into the ravine on the left or the embankment on the right; the final result is a wrecked vehicle and a journey that ends in failure. The institutional church has fractured into thousands of pieces because men have consistently chosen to die in a ditch rather than walk the straight path. History is littered with the rusted wreckage of these doctrinal collisions.

The ditch on the right is filled with the sharp debris of self-righteousness. It is the ditch of the Pharisee, the man who meticulously cleans the outside of the cup while the inside overflows with extortion and excess. Here, the rigid determinist willingly drives into the trench, proclaiming a harsh theology that strips away human responsibility. They teach that every single human action was pre-planned before the foundation of the world, effectively driving the vehicle completely off the road of love, mercy, and genuine free will.

Conversely, the ditch on the left is filled with the thick mud of cheap grace. This is the ditch where individuals use the boundless grace of God as a free license to excuse their own sin. The compromiser jumps into this mud, proclaiming that human emotion is supreme and that personal choice is the only metric of faith. They drift seamlessly into the broader culture, adopting its loose morals while complaining that the narrow way is simply too restrictive for the modern era.

These voices claim that because a soul is saved, daily actions no longer carry weight. Yet the Master’s command stands resolute: *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me”* (Luke 9:23). The inhabitants of the left ditch have thrown away the heavy, splintered wood of the cross just to carry a soft cushion. Both sides hold tightly to a handful of isolated verses to defend their chosen ditch, but neither side possesses the whole counsel of God.

The False Authority of the Experts

This pulling effect is easily observed in the realm of politics, but tragically, the body of Christ has allowed the exact same dynamic to infect its ranks. Put one podium on the left and another on the right, and a false binary is instantly created. This theatrical setup forces the audience to believe they must pick between only two choices. On one side stand those who emphasize strict law and absolute sovereignty to the exclusion of human responsibility. On the other side stand those who emphasize grace and free will to the exclusion of holiness and obedience. The truth of the Bible is never a weak, lukewarm compromise between these two extremes. It is the bold, undeniable line that runs straight through the middle of them.

On the right side of the road sits a library of heavy theological books, and on the left sits another library of equal size. Both sides boast their own scholars, their own specialized dictionaries, and centuries of tradition backing their claims. Yet, they fundamentally contradict each other on the

core mechanics of the Christian faith. This happens because the foundation of both systems is entirely man-made. The determinist correctly points out the logical fallacies of the compromiser, and the compromiser rightly points out the cruel fallacies of the determinist. Both men are entirely right in their critiques of the other, yet both remain entirely wrong in their final conclusions.

When a simple believer sits across a table from one of these highly trained debaters, the experience is often overwhelming. The expert uses semantic sleight of hand to make the simple truth appear false, while his own complicated error appears true through the sheer force of his intellect. This is not the wisdom of God; it is merely the survival of the fittest philosopher. Jesus gave a clear warning about these titled authorities: *“But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren”* (Matthew 23:8).

Realigning with the Wisdom from Above

To correct the drift, a believer must pull the frame of their faith back until it perfectly matches the original specifications. That exact specification is found clearly in the Epistle of James. *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy”* (James 3:17). This single verse acts as a heavy lead plumb line. By it, every doctrine and every teacher must be measured.

The text begins by stating that the wisdom from above is first pure. It is entirely unmixed with the pollutants of human opinion, political agendas, or philosophical guesswork. It is the clear, cold water of the Word, not the muddy runoff of a scholar's commentary. After establishing purity, the scripture demands that wisdom be peaceable. It must actively unite what was previously broken and separated.

God is not the author of confusion. Confusion separates, divides, and causes strife among brethren. Furthermore, divine wisdom is gentle and easy to be entreated. It is open, accessible, and willing to listen. A man armed with the actual truth does not need to shout, bully, or complicate the issue to win a point. The truth is a lion. A lion does not require a defense attorney; it only needs someone to open the cage and let it loose.

The Harmony of the Center

True biblical alignment is found only in harmony. The truth does not force a choice between the verses on the right and the verses on the left; it accepts them all without a trace of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy, in this theological context, is the act of holding a double standard—claiming to believe the entire Bible, but quietly twisting half of its words to sustain a man-made system. The Creator is not a hypocrite, and His Word contains zero contradictions.

Alignment happens when a believer gathers every single verse on a given topic and listens to their unified testimony. The process starts with the simple, undisputed verses, letting the clear commands of Christ establish a solid baseline. The sovereignty of God is embraced because the text plainly teaches it, and the absolute responsibility of man to repent is embraced because the text boldly commands it.

There is no need to force these two massive truths into a cage match. Instead, they stand together as the two parallel steel rails of a train track, bearing the heavy weight of the gospel and carrying the believer toward heaven. If a doctrine requires a person to ignore a verse, or to consult an ancient lexicon to redefine a common word like "world" or "all" just to make the system work, the wheels are out of alignment. The truth never asks a reader to deny a single verse of Scripture. It harmonizes them into a tightly unified whole that glorifies the one who wrote it.

The Foundation of Simplicity

The Gospel was not originally handed down to the scholars. It was given to the fishermen, the tax collectors, and the common laborers. It was written in a manner so plain that a child could understand the path to salvation, yet so profound that a king could spend his entire life searching its depths. *"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes"* (Matthew 11:25).

The religious systems on the right and the left are built entirely on complexity. They rely heavily on the idea that the Bible is a cryptic code, a puzzle that can only be deciphered by elite men possessing a seminary degree. They wield metaphysical concepts like weapons to intimidate the common believer into silence. They demand that a reader cannot trust their own two eyes when looking at the plain English of the text. But the necessary realignment is a complete return to the *"simplicity that is in Christ"* (2 Corinthians 11:3).

It is the quiet, unshakable confidence to read the text and believe exactly what it says. When the text states that Christ died for all, the aligned mind believes He literally died for all. When it boldly states that faith without works is dead, the aligned mind accepts that a living faith produces visible, undeniable fruit. There is no need for a dusty dictionary to prove that "all" really means "some," or that "dead" really means "alive."

The ultimate goal of every honest student of the Word must be to end the debate. Believers are not called to win hollow arguments or conquer their brothers in intellectual combat; they are called to find the peace that comes from a unified understanding of truth. *"And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace"* (James 3:18). When the text is rightly divided, the supposed contradictions vanish. The tension dissolves, and the endless theological war ends in a lasting treaty of peace.

If the steering wheel pulls heavily to one side, a driver must not ignore it or pretend the drift is a natural part of the journey. If a believer frequently finds anger rising against others simply because they refuse to use a specific, highly regulated theological vocabulary, the alignment is already lost. The vehicle must be brought into the shop. That shop is the private prayer closet, and the only trusted manual is the plain, unadulterated text of the Scripture.

The modern believer must strip away the bumper stickers of denominational pride. They must remove the aftermarket modifications sold by popular preachers and ignore the modern GPS programmed by the current cultural consensus. Instead, they must look closely at the ancient map that has never once failed. The road is straight, and the gate is narrow. But the Master walked it long before, leaving clear, unmovable footprints in the dust. The only task left is to keep the eyes

firmly fixed on the Author and Finisher of the faith, realign the frame with the pure Word, and drive straight through to the Kingdom.

A Standard of Testability

Understanding the nature of the text requires a fundamental shift in how one views spiritual authority. True biblical faith never demands that a person place their absolute confidence in the hands of a stranger. For generations, believers have been trained to trust the academic credential, the history of a specific church, or the rhetorical skill of a charismatic speaker. They have been taught to look at the man behind the pulpit and trust his conclusions simply because he holds a title.

To demand that kind of trust would only build the very same man-made podium that must be dismantled. The strength of true theology does not rest on the authority of an author; it rests entirely on its testability. The power to independently verify every claim must remain firmly in the hands of the reader.

This requirement for independent proof led to a modern, rigorous method of cross-examination. The foundational text was subjected to the scrutiny of artificial intelligence, utilizing two distinct leading models as impartial judges. Relying on a single digital system would have produced an inferior, untested result. Instead, the theology was forced through two separate digital minds to cross-examine and refine the concepts. These systems were not used to generate new theology or invent clever arguments. They were deployed to test, challenge, and verify the method at every single stage. In the end, they served as cold, emotionless judges. This method strips away the demand to trust a human author and forces a direct confrontation with the biblical text itself.

The Core Rule of Harmony

Before examining the digital testing process, one must understand the foundation that governs this approach to scripture. The method is straightforward, transparent, and historically known as topical Bible study. To discover the absolute truth of any given subject, a person must first gather every single verse in the Bible that speaks on that exact topic. The mind cannot start with five isolated verses and attempt to build a massive philosophical system around them.

Once the comprehensive list is gathered—a list that usually contains thirty to forty distinct verses—the text must be read in plain English. The focus narrows to the concise, three-to-seven-word phrases contained within those verses. There is no need to consult a human commentary to explain what the text supposedly implies. There is no need for a deep academic grasp of ancient Greek or Hebrew linguistics to understand the core meaning.

The linguists who came before, men like William Tyndale, have already done the heavy lifting. Dozens of the finest scholars in the known world sat on the translation committees that produced the King James Bible in 1611. Their historic work stands firm against the absolute best secular linguists operating today. All that is required of a modern mind is to read their clear translation with a childlike faith and believe exactly what it says.

When a person approaches the text this way, they become bound by one non-negotiable rule. A believer is not allowed to hold a theological conclusion that contradicts even a single verse on the topic. If a conclusion requires a person to twist, ignore, or explain away a verse, that conclusion is

fundamentally broken. True biblical doctrine must rest in quiet, unbroken harmony across every single verse on the subject.

The Digital Gauntlet

Because the human mind is naturally prone to bias, it will instinctively protect its own deeply held beliefs. To ensure that theological conclusions truly met this strict standard of harmony, the material had to face a brutal digital gauntlet. This gauntlet was not built to prove a specific theology right; it was built to test whether it was fundamentally wrong.

The digital systems were given a single task: test the conclusions under strict, unyielding protocols. The artificial intelligence was strictly forbidden from accessing any human commentary, denominational statements, or historic theological traditions to explain away the biblical text. It was restricted exclusively to analyzing the plain text of the King James Version in English. The source material used to define the topics and provide the verse lists came from historic, unbiased tools like Nave's Topical Bible, Torrey's Topical Textbook, the Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge, and Strong's Concordance.

The artificial intelligence was instructed to analyze the theological conclusions against the full, exhaustive list of thirty or forty verses for every single topic. It had to verify if the writing remained in perfect harmony across the entirety of the text. If the machine detected even a slight scriptural contradiction, the conclusion failed the test. The digital systems served as impartial judges, entirely immune to the emotional loyalty of church tradition.

The Results of the Fire

This strict requirement for scriptural harmony was only the first stage of the verification process. The subsequent stages involved testing the written material against known logical and philosophical errors. The digital models were programmed to screen the theology against over fifty logical fallacies and twenty-five philosophical fallacies. This deep screening covered virtually every known intellectual trap and deceptive argument that men use to prop up weak ideas.

The theology held its ground under this severe scrutiny. No contradictions were found within the biblical analysis. The ideas remained consistent across all the gathered verses, never once relying on philosophical leaps or logical traps to bridge a gap in the text. The conclusions did not require redefining common, everyday words to force a man-made system to function.

Passing this test does not elevate the written text to the level of scripture, nor does it render the human mind that compiled it infallible. It simply proves that the topical method is sound, and the resulting theology is consistent with the whole counsel of God. The text passed through the highest, most advanced tiers of digital cross-examination without breaking its alignment. The truth of the scriptures proved, once again, to possess zero internal contradictions.

The End of the Expert Middleman

The most vital aspect of this digital gauntlet is that no one is required to take another man's word for it. Any individual can recreate this exact testing environment in their own home today. A person can pick up a physical copy of Nave's Topical Bible or open a free digital Bible application. This specific tool has provided exhaustive lists of verses for over twenty thousand topics for more than a century, remaining completely free of biased human commentary.

A reader can locate the core topics of the Christian faith and pull all thirty or forty of those specific verses. They can read those critical three-to-seven-word phrases directly with their own eyes. They can feed those exact verses into their own artificial intelligence program, upload a theological claim, and command the machine to cross-examine the words. The machine can be ordered to search for any logical fallacies, philosophical errors, or scriptural contradictions that a human mind might have missed.

If a reader does not like the pure biblical conclusions that result from this process, they can close the book and walk away. But no man can walk away from the reality of Nave's Topical Bible. Every person is fully capable of reading the text for themselves and following the exact same protocol using their own mind and their own Bible. The harmony of scripture can be verified independently, permanently bypassing the need for an expert middleman.

The Historic Advantage

This massive level of independent verification is a distinct advantage that modern believers hold over the most famous theologians of the past. Historical figures like Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Calvin critically lacked complete information before they locked in their final conclusions. Exhaustive concordances simply did not exist in the civilized world prior to the nineteenth century. These famous men were forced to construct their massive theology using a severely limited number of verses. It is highly reasonable to forgive these men, for they did the very best they could with the incomplete data they possessed in their respective centuries.

But a modern man living in the twenty-first century carries exhaustive concordances, advanced Bible software, and artificial intelligence right in his pocket. The modern mind has access to tools that can verify any conclusion against the entire King James Bible in a matter of seconds. This sharp reality leaves the modern reader with absolutely no valid excuse to remain locked in the incomplete, fractured theology of the past. The tools for theological safety are stronger today than at any point in human history, allowing a person to accurately and safely reach final spiritual conclusions.

The Weight of the Archive

To understand the gravity of this testing, one must understand the sheer volume of the material examined. This theological foundation was not generated overnight as a sudden digital experiment. The material submitted to the digital gauntlet represented a vast archive, built methodically over decades starting in the early 1990s. The database spanned over nine thousand pages, dozens of published volumes, and hundreds of transcribed lectures. This massive body of text provided the artificial intelligence with a broad, deep database from which to run its tests. This scale is not a

monument to human effort; it simply demonstrates the staggering weight and thoroughness of the verification process.

Navigating the Hundred Questions

The core of this theological journey requires a mind to systematically work through one hundred distinct questions and their biblical answers. These truths are built in a dual structure: a quick summary format and a highly detailed, comprehensive answer format. The one hundred summary answers are roughly one hundred and seventy-five words long. Because of this concise length, an average reader can consume all of them in exactly ninety minutes.

When beginning this process, a person should push themselves to read all one hundred summary answers in a single, uninterrupted sitting. Doing this creates a rapid succession of biblical truth that forces the gears of the mind back into sharp alignment with the King James Bible. The comprehensive, longer answers are strategically placed for anyone who requires a deeper dive. They stand ready specifically for the moments when a reader feels challenged, angered, or deeply convicted by the shorter text.

As the reader moves through the summaries, they should write down the specific number of every question that causes friction in their mind. They must pay close attention to the answers that challenge their personal theology the most. Later, they can return to those specific numbers and take the necessary deeper dive into the longer text. Through all of this, a person must never try to line up their understanding of the Bible with a specific church denomination. The only goal is to align the heart and the theology strictly with the pure text of the scripture.

The Final Challenge

If a person begins reading the Bible carrying the wrong goal in mind, they will inevitably arrive at the wrong destination. If a seeker's personal goal is simply to find a way to agree with Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, or any modern preacher, they will easily find a path to do so. But trusting those historical men is not the path that leads to genuine salvation. The eyes must remain fixed on the King James Bible, and the mind must refuse to look away.

Trust must never be placed in a human author, and eternal trust must never rest on any mortal man. Biblical faith belongs exclusively to Jesus Christ and securely in His word. The theological goal must be violently clear from the very start of the journey. The ultimate goal is to bring human understanding fully and completely into line with the scripture alone.

Let every belief pass this threefold test. Demand full topical harmony with the entire Bible. Demand total freedom from logical fallacies. Demand absolute freedom from philosophical errors. The tools are ready in hand, the method is fully transparent, and the scriptures lie open. Do not trust the conclusions of men; test the pure word of God for yourself.

Part I: KJV vs. Calvinism: 100 Summary Answers

The Foundation: God's Nature and Man's Condition

Question 1. How does the Bible describe the love of God, and does it present this love as being for all people or only for a select group?

Answer 1. The Bible presents the love of God as a multifaceted attribute, both sovereign and universally offered. Scripture is clear that God's love extends to the entire world, demonstrated most profoundly in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, as stated in John 3:16. This is not a passive, sentimental love, but an active, redemptive love that desires **all men to be saved** and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. While God demonstrates a particular, covenantal love for His chosen people, the elect, this does not negate the broader, compassionate love He holds for all humanity. The universal offer of the gospel and the command to preach it to every creature stand as testaments to this truth. Therefore, to confine God's love only to a select group is to create a false dichotomy. The Bible harmonizes these truths, showing a God whose love is vast enough to provide a genuine, bona fide offer of salvation to every person, even while He works all things according to the counsel of His own will. His love is the very foundation of His mercy and grace, which are extended freely, not coercively.

Question 2. According to Scripture, what is the extent of God's sovereignty? Does His sovereignty negate human free will and responsibility?

Answer 2. Scripture presents God's sovereignty as absolute and all-encompassing; He works all things after the counsel of His own will and His purpose shall stand. However, the Bible does not present this sovereignty as a force that negates or overrides human responsibility. Instead, it holds two seemingly paradoxical truths in perfect harmony: **God is completely sovereign, and man is completely responsible.** The Bible is replete with commands for mankind to choose, repent, believe, and obey, all of which presuppose a genuine ability to respond. Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, "how often would I have gathered thy children together... and ye would not!" powerfully illustrates this point. God's sovereignty is not the fatalistic determinism of pagan philosophy, where humans are mere puppets. Rather, it is the wise and powerful governance of a Creator who has sovereignly decreed that mankind should have free will. He draws people to Himself, but the call can be resisted. He does not cause sin, but He can use the sinful acts of men to accomplish His ultimate, redemptive purposes, as seen in the crucifixion of Christ.

Question 3. What does it mean that God is "no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), and how does this principle apply to salvation?

Answer 3. The declaration that God is "no respecter of persons" is a foundational biblical principle revealing His absolute impartiality and justice. It means that God does not show favoritism based on external factors such as nationality, social status, wealth, or any other human distinction. In the context of salvation, this is a profound truth. Peter's revelation in Acts 10, upon seeing the Holy Ghost fall upon the Gentile Cornelius and his household, shattered the long-held belief that salvation was exclusive to the Jews. It demonstrates that the path to God is open to **anyone, in any**

nation, who fears Him and works righteousness. This principle directly challenges any theological system suggesting that God arbitrarily selects some individuals for salvation while unconditionally passing over others. The gospel invitation is universal, and the terms of acceptance—faith and repentance—are the same for all. God judges righteously, based on a person's response to the light they have been given, not on a pre-ordained, selective decree.

Question 4. How does the Bible define the "grace of God"? Is it a force that cannot be resisted, or is it an offer that can be accepted or rejected?

Answer 4. The Bible defines the grace of God not as an irresistible metaphysical force, but as the unmerited, benevolent favor of God expressed through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is the very foundation of salvation, as Ephesians 2:8 states, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Scripture portrays this grace as an active, powerful influence that teaches, redeems, and justifies, but it also clearly indicates that it can be resisted. Stephen directly accused the Sanhedrin of **always resisting the Holy Ghost**, just as their fathers did. Paul warned the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain and cautioned the Galatians about falling from grace. These warnings would be meaningless if grace were an irresistible force. Therefore, grace is a divine, enabling offer. It is the power of God that draws and woos sinners, making salvation possible, but it does not violate the human will that God Himself created. It is a gift that must be received, not a decree that is imposed.

Question 5. What is the biblical definition of "mercy," and to whom is it extended?

Answer 5. Biblical mercy is God's tender-hearted compassion and forbearance, the act of withholding a just punishment that is deserved. It is intrinsically linked to His love and goodness, which are over all His works. While grace is God giving us a gift we do not deserve (salvation), mercy is God not giving us the punishment we do deserve (damnation). The Bible shows that God's mercy is abundant, plenteous, and everlasting. It is extended broadly to all of creation, but it is specifically and redemptively applied to those who respond to Him in humility and repentance. The Lord is merciful to them that fear Him, to returning backsliders, and to repentant sinners. Crucially, Romans 9:15, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," does not teach that God's mercy is arbitrary or limited to a pre-selected few. Rather, it establishes God's sovereign right to **define the terms upon which His mercy is granted**—namely, through faith in Jesus Christ, which is the channel He has ordained for both Jew and Gentile. His mercy is not a contradiction of His justice, but a glorious expression of His loving character.

Question 6. According to Genesis 3 and Romans 5, what were the immediate and long-term consequences of Adam's sin for humanity?

Answer 6. According to Genesis 3 and Romans 5, Adam's sin introduced catastrophic and far-reaching consequences for all of humanity. The immediate results were spiritual death (separation from God), shame, and the introduction of a curse upon the natural world. Long-term, Adam's transgression had a twofold effect. First, **death passed upon all men**, both physical and spiritual, as stated in Romans 5:12. All of humanity now inherits a fallen, corruptible nature, prone to sin. Second, all of creation was subjected to bondage and corruption. However, the Bible is precise about what was inherited. We inherit the consequences of Adam's sin—a sinful nature and a fallen

world—but we are not born guilty of Adam's specific act of transgression. Ezekiel 18 makes it clear that "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." Each person is accountable for their own sin. The "total depravity" taught by some systems, which posits an inability even to respond to God, is an overstatement. Man retains the knowledge of good and evil and a conscience, which the Holy Spirit uses to draw him to the gospel.

Question 7. Does the Bible teach that humans are born "totally depraved" and incapable of seeking God, or do they possess a conscience and a knowledge of good and evil?

Answer 7. The Bible teaches that humanity is born into a state of sinfulness, but not one of absolute inability or "total depravity" in the sense that they are incapable of responding to God. The doctrine of inherited sin is clear: we are all born with a nature inclined toward evil. However, Genesis 3 reveals that with the fall came the **knowledge of good and evil**. This knowledge, coupled with the conscience described in Romans 2, serves as an internal witness to God's law. Paul argues that even Gentiles, who do not have the written law, "do by nature the things contained in the law," showing that their conscience either accuses or excuses them. This capacity is the very thing the Holy Spirit illuminates and uses to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. If humanity were truly incapable of any positive response, the universal calls to "repent," "choose," and "seek" found throughout Scripture would be a divine mockery. The biblical position is that man is radically corrupt and cannot save himself, but he is not a machine; he retains a moral faculty that God's grace can and does appeal to.

Question 8. How does the story of Cornelius in Acts 10 challenge the idea that an unregenerate person cannot perform acts that are pleasing to God?

Answer 8. The story of Cornelius in Acts 10 stands as a powerful biblical refutation of the idea that an unregenerate person is utterly incapable of any act that is pleasing to God. Before ever hearing the gospel from Peter, Cornelius is described as "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." An angel explicitly tells him that his prayers and his alms have **come up for a memorial before God**. This directly contradicts the notion that every action of an unsaved person is sinful and detestable to God. While Cornelius's good works could not save him—he still needed to hear the words of the gospel and be saved by faith in Christ—they were clearly not disregarded by God. The account demonstrates that a person can possess a genuine fear of God and a responsive heart even before regeneration. It shows that God recognizes and responds to such sincerity, not by granting salvation based on those works, but by graciously providing the very means of salvation—the gospel message—to the one who seeks Him.

Question 9. What is the purpose of the law of Moses, according to Paul in Galatians and Romans?

Answer 9. According to the Apostle Paul in Galatians and Romans, the primary purpose of the Law of Moses was not to provide a means of salvation, but to serve as a divine "schoolmaster" to lead humanity to Christ. The Law is holy, just, and good, and its function is to **reveal the nature of sin** and to demonstrate humanity's universal guilt before a holy God. By setting a perfect standard that no one could keep, the Law silenced every mouth and proved that "by the deeds of

the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." It was never intended to be a ladder for man to climb to God, but a mirror to show man his desperate need for a savior. Once faith in Christ has come, Paul declares, we are no longer under this schoolmaster. The Law's purpose was temporary and preparatory. It was added "because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made," that seed being Jesus Christ. It diagnoses the disease of sin but offers no cure; it is the gospel of grace that provides the remedy.

Question 10. If the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), does this refer to spiritual inability or to condemnation and physical death?

Answer 10. The statement "the wages of sin is death" in Romans 6:23 refers unequivocally to **condemnation and the resulting physical and spiritual separation from God**, not to a state of spiritual inability that prevents one from believing. The Bible consistently defines death in legal and relational terms. Spiritually, it is separation from the life of God. Physically, it is the cessation of life in this world. Eternally, it is the "second death" in the lake of fire, the ultimate consequence of unforgiven sin. The concept of "total inability" is a philosophical inference read into the text, not the direct teaching of Scripture itself. When the Bible speaks of being "dead in trespasses and sins," it describes a state of condemnation and alienation, not a lack of capacity to respond to a command. A man condemned to death row is legally dead, yet he can still hear and respond to a pardon. Similarly, a sinner is condemned, yet he can hear and respond to the gospel of grace. The wage is a just sentence, not an inherent paralysis of the will.

The Gospel and the Atonement

Question 11. According to 1 Corinthians 15, what are the essential components of the Gospel message that Paul preached?

Answer 11. According to 1 Corinthians 15, the Gospel message that Paul preached, and which he received directly, consists of three core, non-negotiable, historical facts. First, **Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures**. This was not a random tragedy but the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, a substitutionary sacrifice to atone for sin. Second, **he was buried**. This is a crucial, yet often overlooked, component that verifies the reality of His death. A phantom does not need a tomb. His burial confirms He was truly dead, making the subsequent event all the more miraculous. Third, **he rose again the third day according to the scriptures**. This is the pinnacle of the Gospel, the ultimate proof of His deity and the victory over sin and death. These three elements—the death, burial, and resurrection—form the irreducible core of the good news. This is the message "by which also ye are saved," and any message that omits or alters these foundational pillars is, according to Paul, "another gospel."

Question 12. How do the "whosoever" passages in the Bible (e.g., John 3:16, Romans 10:13) inform our understanding of the scope of the Gospel invitation?

Answer 12. The "whosoever" passages in the Bible are a divine declaration of the **unlimited and universal scope of the Gospel invitation**. Phrases like "whosoever believeth in him" in John 3:16 and "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" in Romans 10:13 are

intentionally broad and unrestricted. They stand in direct opposition to any theological system that seeks to limit the offer of salvation to a pre-selected, exclusive group. The word "whosoever" demolishes the man-made walls of particular redemption. It means exactly what it says: any person, from any background, without exception, who meets the condition of faith, is eligible for salvation. These verses are not a divine slip of the tongue or a misleading advertisement for a product available only to a few. They are the sincere, bona fide offer of a loving God who "will have all men to be saved." They inform us that the gate to salvation is narrow, requiring faith and repentance, but it is open to anyone who desires to enter.

Question 13. What is the meaning of Christ's death being a "propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2)?

Answer 13. The statement in 1 John 2:2 is one of the clearest affirmations in Scripture of the **unlimited extent of Christ's atonement**. The term "propitiation" refers to the turning away of wrath by an offering; Christ's sacrifice satisfied the just demands of a holy God against sin. John, writing to believers, makes a crucial distinction. He says Christ is the propitiation for "our" sins (the sins of believers), but then immediately expands the scope: "and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." This addition is unambiguous and intentional, designed to prevent any misunderstanding that Christ's death was limited in its sufficiency. It is a death powerful enough to save every single person. While the benefits of the atonement are only applied to those who believe, its provision was made for all humanity. This verse single-handedly dismantles the doctrine of a limited atonement, proving that Christ's death was sufficient for all, even if it is only efficient for those who exercise faith.

Question 14. How does the command to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) align with the doctrine of a limited atonement?

Answer 14. The Great Commission to "preach the gospel to every creature" is fundamentally incompatible with the doctrine of a limited atonement. If Christ's death was intended only for a select group of elect, then the universal command to preach becomes a problematic, if not deceptive, exercise. How can one make a sincere, universal offer of a salvation that was never universally provided? It would mean missionaries are commanded to offer a free gift that, for the vast majority of their hearers, does not actually exist. This turns the gospel invitation into a hollow gesture. The biblical mandate, however, presupposes a genuine opportunity for **every creature to be saved**. The command is universal because the provision is universal. Christ's atonement is sufficient for all, which is why the offer can be genuinely made to all. The doctrine of limited atonement creates an irreconcilable tension with the church's marching orders, forcing its adherents into logical gymnastics to explain how a limited provision can be the basis for an unlimited call.

Question 15. If Christ's atonement was intended only for the elect, what is the purpose of the universal calls to repentance found throughout Scripture?

Answer 15. The universal calls to repentance found throughout Scripture serve as powerful evidence against the notion that Christ's atonement was intended only for the elect. God's command in Acts 17:30 that all men everywhere should repent would be insincere if the majority of those men had no possibility of being saved because no atonement was made for them. Why

command a man to turn from his sin and flee to a savior who did not die for him? It would be like telling a starving man to go to a banquet that was prepared only for a select few. The universal call to repent implies a **universal provision of grace and a universal opportunity for forgiveness**. God's commands are not a divine charade. They are genuine invitations rooted in the reality that "God our Saviour... will have all men to be saved." The calls to repentance are purposeful because Christ's death was sufficient for all, making forgiveness available to anyone who turns from their sin and believes the gospel.

Question 16. What does it mean that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4)?

Answer 16. The declaration in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God "will have all men to be saved" is a clear statement of **God's universal, benevolent desire for the salvation of all humanity**. This verse reveals the heart of God. His desire is not for the destruction of the wicked, but for their redemption. The word "will" in this context speaks to His desire, His wish, His benevolent disposition, not to an irresistible, deterministic decree that ensures every person will, in fact, be saved. The Bible makes it clear that not all will be saved, because many will reject God's gracious offer. This verse, therefore, stands in stark opposition to any theology that posits God unconditionally and eternally decreed for the majority of humanity to be damned. It must be harmonized with other scriptures that show man's ability to resist God's will. God's desire is for all to be saved, and He made this possible through the death of Christ, who is the "ransom for all." The responsibility for accepting or rejecting this salvation rests with each individual.

Question 17. How does the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:16-24) illustrate the nature of God's call and human response?

Answer 17. The parable of the great supper in Luke 14 provides a vivid illustration of the nature of God's call and the reality of human response. It shows, first, that the initial invitation is genuine and generous. The master of the house prepared a great feast and invited many, symbolizing God's initial covenant call to the nation of Israel. However, the parable then demonstrates that **the call can be, and often is, rejected**. Those who were first invited made excuses, prioritizing worldly concerns over the master's invitation. This illustrates human responsibility and the ability to refuse God's gracious offer. In response to this rejection, the master's call is then extended outward, to the "poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind" and to those in the "highways and hedges." This represents the gospel going out to the Gentiles and the outcasts. The parable powerfully refutes the idea of an irresistible call, as the first group clearly resisted. It shows a God who desires His house to be full and extends His invitation broadly when the initial guests prove themselves unworthy.

Question 18. What is the relationship between faith, repentance, and hearing the Gospel message?

Answer 18. The relationship between faith, repentance, and hearing the Gospel is an inseparable, sequential bond. **Hearing the Gospel is the necessary catalyst** for both faith and repentance. As Romans 10:17 states, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The Gospel message—the news of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection for our sins—is the power of

God unto salvation. When this message is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit works to convict the hearer of their sin and their need for a savior. In response to this divine initiative, the individual must exercise faith—a trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ—and repentance—a turning away from sin and toward God. Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin of conversion. They are not separate works but a unified response to the truth of the Gospel. One cannot truly believe in Christ without turning from sin, and one cannot truly repent without placing their faith in Christ.

Question 19. Can a person be regenerated or "born again" before they have heard and believed the Gospel?

Answer 19. The Bible teaches that regeneration, or being "born again," is intrinsically linked to hearing and believing the Gospel message and cannot occur before it. The apostle Peter states that we are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever." James 1:18 echoes this: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." Regeneration is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, but He performs this work in conjunction with the proclamation of the Gospel. The Word of God is the instrument the Spirit uses to impart new life. To suggest that regeneration precedes faith is to put the cart before the horse. It would mean God makes a person alive spiritually, and then that person believes. The biblical order, however, is clear: a person hears the Gospel, the Spirit convicts them, they respond in faith and repentance, and at that moment, they are regenerated and sealed by the Spirit. The idea of regeneration before hearing the gospel has no scriptural support and is a philosophical construct designed to support the doctrine of irresistible grace.

Question 20. How does the Bible define "justification," and is it a one-time declaration or a lifelong process?

Answer 20. The Bible defines justification as a **one-time, instantaneous legal declaration** by God, not a lifelong process of becoming righteous. It is a forensic act, taking place in the courtroom of heaven, where God, as the righteous judge, declares a believing sinner to be righteous in His sight. This declaration is not based on any inherent goodness or future potential in the person, but solely on the basis of their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Through faith, the perfect righteousness of Christ is "imputed," or credited, to the believer's account, while the believer's sin was imputed to Christ on the cross. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." The use of the past tense ("being justified") indicates a completed action. Conflating justification with bearing fruit (our ongoing growth in following Christ) is a critical error that undermines the assurance of salvation. Justification is the foundation, a past-tense reality for every true believer, upon which the Christian life is built.

Election and Predestination

Question 21. When the New Testament uses the term "elect," is it referring to specific individuals chosen for salvation from eternity, or to the nation of Israel and, by extension, the church?

Answer 21. When the New Testament uses the term "elect," it is crucial to examine the context, as it does not carry a single, monolithic meaning. Primarily, in the Gospels and much of Romans, the term refers specifically to the **nation of Israel**, God's chosen people under the Old Covenant. Jesus spoke of shortening the days of tribulation "for the elect's sake," referring to the Jews in Judea. However, with the establishment of the New Covenant, the meaning expands. The church, comprised of both Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Christ, becomes the new "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation." Therefore, election is corporate as well as individual. God chose a people for Himself—first Israel, now the church. The error of some theological systems is to read a post-Reformation definition of individual, unconditional election for salvation back into every biblical use of the word, ignoring the primary context of national, covenantal election that defines its meaning in so many key passages.

Question 22. How does the context of Romans 9, which focuses on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, affect the interpretation of election?

Answer 22. The broader context of Romans 9, which is the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, is absolutely critical to its correct interpretation and fundamentally reframes the discussion of election. The chapter is not an abstract treatise on God's eternal, unconditional decree to save or damn individuals. Rather, it is Paul's answer to a pressing question: Has God's promise to Israel failed, now that the Gospel is going to the Gentiles? Paul's argument is that God's purpose was never based on physical lineage ("they are not all Israel, which are of Israel") but on His sovereign choice to fulfill His promise. He uses the examples of Jacob and Esau, and Pharaoh, not to teach individual predestination to heaven or hell, but to illustrate God's sovereign right to choose the **vehicles through which His redemptive plan unfolds in history**. The hardening of some in Israel and the calling of the Gentiles were part of this plan to create one new man in Christ. To lift verses out of this context is to distort Paul's entire argument, turning a discussion about God's historical, redemptive purposes into a blueprint for fatalism.

Question 23. What was John the Baptist's warning to the "elect" nation of Israel in Matthew 3, and what does it imply about the security of the elect?

Answer 23. John the Baptist's warning to the religious leaders of Israel—the "elect" nation—in Matthew 3 serves as a devastating refutation of the idea of unconditional security. When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism, he did not affirm their elect status. Instead, he called them a "generation of vipers" and warned them not to presume safety based on their lineage, saying, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." His most pointed statement was, "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." This implies that **election is not an unconditional guarantee of salvation**. Even the chosen branches of the national tree of Israel could be cut off if they did not bear the fruit of repentance. This directly contradicts the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, which claims that the truly elect cannot fall away. John's message establishes that a privileged position does not equal a permanent one; it must be accompanied by genuine, fruit-bearing faith.

Question 24. According to Ephesians 1, what are believers predestined to? Is it salvation itself, or adoption and conformity to Christ's image?

Answer 24. A careful reading of Ephesians 1 reveals that believers are predestined not to salvation itself in a deterministic sense, but to the **glorious inheritance and position** that comes with salvation. The text says God "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." The purpose of this predestination is our ongoing growth in following Christ ("that we should be holy") and our familial relationship with God ("adoption of children"). Similarly, Romans 8:29 states that those whom God foreknew, He "also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." The focus of predestination is the ultimate goal for those who are "in him"—their final, glorified state. It is God's eternal plan for what believers will become, not an eternal decree that irresistibly causes belief in the first place. It is the destination God has planned for all who get on the train of faith, not a decree that forces certain people onto the train.

Question 25. How does the doctrine of God's foreknowledge (Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2) relate to the concept of election?

Answer 25. The doctrine of God's foreknowledge is explicitly and inextricably linked to the concept of election in Scripture. It is not that God elects individuals and therefore foreknows they will be saved; rather, the Bible presents the reverse order. Romans 8:29 states, "For whom he did **foreknow**, he also did predestinate..." and 1 Peter 1:2 addresses believers as "Elect according to the **foreknowledge** of God the Father." This means that God, in His omniscience, existing outside of time, knew from eternity past who would freely respond to His gracious offer of salvation in Christ. Election, therefore, is not an arbitrary or unconditional choice. It is God's choice of those whom He knew would choose Him. This does not undermine God's sovereignty; it magnifies it. His sovereign plan was to create beings with free will and to elect, or choose, to save all who would place their faith in His Son. Foreknowledge does not cause the event, any more than a meteorologist's forecast causes a storm. God simply knows the end from the beginning.

Question 26. If election is unconditional, why does the Bible place so much emphasis on the conditions of faith and repentance?

Answer 26. The Bible's overwhelming emphasis on the conditions of faith and repentance stands as a significant challenge to the doctrine of unconditional election. Scripture is filled with commands and invitations that are explicitly conditional. "He that **believeth** on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). "**Repent** ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). These are not suggestions; they are the divinely appointed requirements for receiving salvation. If election were truly unconditional, these conditions would be rendered largely meaningless—a mere script for humans to act out after their fate has already been irresistibly determined. Why would God command all men everywhere to repent if only a select few are unconditionally chosen and enabled to do so? The presence of these conditions throughout the Bible strongly implies that **human response is a genuine and necessary part of the salvation equation**. God has sovereignly decreed that the condition for entering His kingdom is faith, a condition that His grace enables, but which each individual must personally fulfill.

Question 27. What is the "Book of Life," and what does the possibility of names being "blotted out" (Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5) suggest about unconditional election?

Answer 27. The Book of Life is a heavenly record, mentioned throughout Scripture, containing the names of those who are heirs of eternal life. The most profound insight into its nature is that names are not added at conversion, but can be **blotted out**. In Exodus 32, Moses intercedes for sinful Israel, and God responds, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." In Revelation 3, Christ promises the overcomer, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." This possibility of removal is utterly incompatible with the doctrine of unconditional election and eternal security. If a name can be removed, then the person's standing was conditional. The biblical teaching suggests that God, in His foreknowledge and love, inscribed all of humanity in His book from the foundation of the world, based on the provision of the Lamb slain. However, through unrepentant sin and unbelief, individuals can forfeit their place, leading to their names being blotted out. This harmonizes God's universal love with individual responsibility.

Question 28. How does the grafting of the Gentiles into the olive tree in Romans 11 illustrate the nature of election and the possibility of being "cut off"?

Answer 28. The analogy of the olive tree in Romans 11 is one of the most powerful illustrations of conditional election in all of Scripture. The natural branches, representing the nation of Israel (the original "elect"), were **broken off because of unbelief**. The wild olive branches, representing the Gentiles, were grafted in contrary to nature, not because of an unconditional decree, but "by faith." Paul then issues a stark warning to the newly grafted-in Gentile believers: "Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." He explicitly states that they stand by faith and can be "cut off" if they do not continue in His goodness. This passage demolishes the idea of an unconditional, irrevocable election. It shows that one's position in the covenant tree is maintained by faith and that even those who are "in" can be removed. It perfectly illustrates that election is a call to a privileged position that requires a continuing response of faith to maintain.

Question 29. What does it mean that "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14)?

Answer 29. The statement "many are called, but few are chosen," found at the conclusion of the parable of the wedding feast, distinguishes between the universal nature of the gospel invitation and the particular nature of the final remnant who accept it. The "call" is the broad, external proclamation of the gospel, which goes out to many. In the parable, the invitation was extended to all, both "bad and good." This represents the universal offer of salvation. The "chosen," however, are those who not only accept the invitation but also meet the conditions of the king. In the parable, this is represented by the man who was cast out for not having a wedding garment, symbolizing the righteousness of Christ that is received by faith. Therefore, the verse does not teach that God only calls a few. It teaches that **the call goes out to many, but only a few respond appropriately** with genuine, saving faith. The choice, in this context, is not an arbitrary, pre-temporal decree by God, but a description of the final group who are deemed worthy because they have embraced the king's provision.

Question 30. How can we reconcile the verses on God's sovereign choice with the verses that emphasize human responsibility to "choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15)?

Answer 30. The reconciliation of God's sovereign choice and human responsibility is found not in philosophical systems that try to eliminate one in favor of the other, but in accepting the Bible's full testimony. The key is understanding that **God sovereignly decreed that man should have a will with which to choose.** The command in Joshua, "choose you this day whom ye will serve," is a genuine command requiring a genuine choice. It is not a charade. God's sovereignty is not compromised by this; it is magnified. He is so sovereign that He can create beings with the freedom to accept or reject Him, and still accomplish His ultimate purposes. The Bible does not present these as contradictory but as complementary truths. God initiates, draws, and enables through His grace ("No man can come to me, except the Father...draw him"). Man responds to that initiative by choosing, believing, and repenting. The error is to create a false dilemma, forcing an "either-or" choice between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, when the Bible consistently upholds both.

The Will of Man and the Grace of God

Question 31. Does the Bible teach that the human will is completely bound and unable to respond to God's grace?

Answer 31. The Bible teaches that the human will is fallen, corrupted by sin, and in bondage, but not that it is completely bound and unable to respond to God's grace. Scripture affirms that without divine initiative, no one would seek God. However, it also consistently issues commands and invitations that presuppose the ability to respond. Jesus's words, "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40), place the responsibility for rejection squarely on the human will, not on an inherent inability. The problem is not a lack of capacity, but a lack of desire—a love for darkness rather than light. God's grace, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the hearing of the Word, **enlightens the mind and persuades the will**, making a positive response possible. The will is not coerced or bypassed; it is wooed and enabled. The idea of a will so completely bound that it cannot even respond to God's drawing is a philosophical concept of determinism, not a direct teaching of the biblical text.

Question 32. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in drawing people to Christ (John 6:44), and is this drawing irresistible?

Answer 32. The role of the Holy Spirit in drawing people to Christ is essential and initiatory. Jesus states in John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." This "drawing" is the divine work of the Spirit, convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and illuminating the truth of the Gospel. It is the necessary prerequisite for salvation. However, the Bible does not portray this drawing as an irresistible, coercive force. The Greek word for "draw" (*helkuo*) can mean to drag, but it is also used for drawing in a net, which contains both good and bad fish, implying a non-discriminatory drawing. More importantly, Stephen's accusation in Acts 7:51, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye do always resist the Holy Ghost**," proves that the Spirit's influence can be resisted. Jesus's lament over Jerusalem confirms this. Therefore, the Spirit's drawing is a powerful, persuasive, and enabling call that makes salvation possible, but it is not a force that violates human volition.

Question 33. How do the repeated invitations to "come," "ask," "seek," and "knock" in Scripture imply a capacity for human response?

Answer 33. The repeated, earnest invitations from God to "come," "ask," "seek," and "knock" are one of the strongest biblical arguments for the human capacity to respond to grace. These are not rhetorical flourishes; they are genuine commands and offers from God to mankind. The final invitation of the Bible in Revelation 22:17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," is a perfect summary. The command to "ask" for what you do not have, to "seek" what you have lost, and to "knock" on a door that is closed to you inherently implies that the person being addressed **has the ability to perform these actions**. If the human will were completely passive and unable to respond until irresistibly regenerated, these invitations would be nonsensical. They are addressed to the needy and the lost, presupposing that upon hearing the call, they can, by God's enabling grace, make a choice to respond.

Question 34. What does Jesus' lament over Jerusalem—"how often would I have gathered thy children together... and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37)—reveal about the resistibility of God's will?

Answer 34. Jesus's heartfelt lament over Jerusalem is a poignant and definitive statement on the resistibility of God's will. In this passage, the divine will is clearly expressed: "how often would I have gathered thy children together." This is the stated desire of God. Yet, the outcome is equally clear: "and ye would not!" This places the reason for their failure to be gathered not on a secret, decretive will of God ordaining their rejection, but squarely on their own rebellious will. It reveals a God who genuinely desires the salvation of those who are ultimately lost and who does not coerce the objects of His love. The passage presents two wills in conflict: **God's will to save and man's will to reject**. In this instance, man's will prevailed, not because it was more powerful, but because God, in His sovereignty, allows for such resistance. This single verse poses an insurmountable problem for any system that teaches that God's saving grace is irresistible.

Question 35. Is the faith that leads to salvation a gift from God that is irresistibly applied, or is it a human response to God's gracious initiative?

Answer 35. The Bible presents faith as both a gift of God and a required human response, a truth that must be held in harmony. Ephesians 2:8 says we are saved "by grace... through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." The "gift" in this passage refers to the entire package of salvation, which is initiated and made possible by God's grace. Faith itself is also enabled by God; it "cometh by hearing... the word of God," and the Holy Spirit convicts and draws. However, the act of believing is consistently portrayed as a **human response to this divine initiative**. Abraham "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." The jailer in Acts was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The idea that faith is a gift that is irresistibly applied to a passive recipient is not supported by the text. Rather, God graciously provides the opportunity, the evidence, and the enabling power to believe, but the individual must personally exercise that faith.

Question 36. If grace is irresistible, why does the Bible contain warnings against resisting the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51) and receiving the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1)?

Answer 36. The explicit biblical warnings against resisting the Holy Spirit and receiving God's grace in vain are logically incompatible with the doctrine of irresistible grace. These warnings would be entirely superfluous and deceptive if such resistance were impossible for the elect. In Acts 7:51, Stephen's condemnation of the Jewish leaders, "ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," is presented as a real and culpable action. He is not accusing them of attempting the impossible. Similarly, Paul's plea to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 6:1, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain," presupposes two possibilities: **receiving grace for salvation or receiving it in vain, meaning to no effect.** If grace were irresistible, no one to whom it was extended could possibly receive it in vain. These passages demonstrate that God's gracious call can be opposed and His offer can be squandered, confirming that while grace is powerful and persuasive, it is not coercive.

Question 37. What is the "effectual call," and is there a biblical basis for a special, internal call that is different from the general, external call of the Gospel?

Answer 37. The concept of an "effectual call"—a special, internal, and irresistible call extended only to the elect, which is distinct from the general, external call of the gospel—is a **theological construct, not a direct biblical teaching.** It was developed within systematic theology to resolve the tension created by the fact that the Bible issues a universal call, yet not all respond. The Bible speaks of one call: the gospel invitation. This call is made "effectual" or effective in a person's life when they respond to it with faith and repentance. It is not that there are two different types of calls being sent out by God. Rather, there is one call that produces two different results based on the human response. The call itself has the power to save, but it only saves those who embrace it. The idea of a secret, selective call is an unnecessary invention that complicates the straightforward gospel message and has no explicit basis in the text.

Question 38. How does the concept of "hardening" the heart, as seen with Pharaoh and Israel, work in the Bible? Is it an active work of God or a consequence of human rebellion?

Answer 38. The biblical concept of God "hardening" a heart is best understood not as God actively creating evil or unbelief in a person, but as a **judicial act of giving a person over to their own rebellion.** The case of Pharaoh is the primary example. The text says both that Pharaoh hardened his own heart and that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. This is not a contradiction. Pharaoh repeatedly and defiantly set his will against God's command. In response to this persistent rebellion, God confirmed and solidified the hardness that was already present. It is an act of judgment where God withdraws His restraining grace and allows a person's own sinful desires to run their full course. The same principle applies to Israel. In Romans 1, Paul describes God "giving them up" to their lusts and a "reprobate mind" after they refused to glorify Him. God does not infuse evil; He removes His hand of mercy from those who persistently push it away, thereby strengthening them in the rebellious path they have already chosen.

Question 39. If a person cannot respond to God without irresistible grace, how can they be held accountable for their unbelief?

Answer 39. The question of accountability is a severe logical and moral problem for the doctrine of irresistible grace. If a person is created with a nature that is utterly unable to believe, and if the grace required to overcome this inability is unconditionally withheld from them, then holding them accountable for their unbelief becomes a **profound injustice**. How can a person be justly condemned for failing to do something they were never able to do? The Bible, however, consistently holds people accountable for their unbelief. Jesus rebuked cities "because they repented not." John 3:19 states that the condemnation is that "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The reason for condemnation is a moral choice—a love of darkness—not a metaphysical inability. Biblical accountability rests on the premise that God gives sufficient light and grace for a person to be held responsible for their response. Without this, judgment becomes arbitrary and God's character is maligned.

Question 40. What is the relationship between God's sovereignty in salvation and man's responsibility to believe?

Answer 40. The relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in salvation is a divine paradox that must be accepted as the Bible presents it, not a contradiction to be solved by human philosophy. The Bible affirms both truths with equal force. God is absolutely sovereign; salvation is "of the Lord." He initiates, He draws, He regenerates, He keeps. Without His sovereign grace, no one would be saved. At the same time, man is fully responsible to respond to that grace. The command to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" is a real command requiring a real response. **God's sovereignty does not cancel man's responsibility; it establishes it.** He sovereignly created man as a moral agent and sovereignly decreed that faith would be the means of salvation. The two truths are not at odds but work in perfect harmony. God's grace enables the will, and the will responds to God's grace. To elevate one truth to the exclusion of the other is to distort the biblical message and create a theological system that is out of balance.

The Perseverance and Security of the Believer

Question 41. Does the Bible teach that once a person is saved, they are always saved, regardless of their subsequent actions?

Answer 41. The Bible does not teach that a person, once saved, is eternally secure regardless of their subsequent actions. This idea, often summarized as "once saved, always saved," is a dangerous distortion of biblical truth. While Scripture gives powerful assurances of God's keeping power for those who abide in Christ, it is equally filled with stark warnings about the possibility of falling away. The security of the believer is **conditional upon continuing in faith and obedience**. Jesus Himself warned that branches in Him that do not bear fruit will be cut off. The writer to the Hebrews speaks of those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and then fall away, for whom it is impossible to be renewed to repentance. The promise of salvation is secure, but our participation in that promise is contingent on our perseverance. To teach that a person can profess faith, live a life of unrepentant sin, and still be secure in their salvation is to offer a false hope that has no foundation in the Word of God.

Question 42. What are the biblical conditions for final salvation, as outlined in passages like Colossians 1:22-23 and Hebrews 3:14?

Answer 42. Passages like Colossians 1:22-23 and Hebrews 3:14 make it explicitly clear that final salvation is conditional upon the believer's perseverance in faith. In Colossians, Paul states that Christ will present believers holy and unblameable "if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." The word "if" establishes a clear condition. Similarly, Hebrews 3:14 declares, "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." These verses, and many others like them, teach that **endurance is the necessary evidence of genuine, saving faith**. This is not salvation by works, but the understanding that the kind of faith that saves is a faith that lasts. The promise is not to those who make a one-time decision, but to "he that shall endure unto the end." Therefore, the biblical condition for final salvation is a living, abiding, and persevering faith in Jesus Christ.

Question 43. How do the numerous warnings against falling away, apostasy, and being "cut off" apply to genuine believers?

Answer 43. The numerous and severe warnings against falling away, apostasy, and being "cut off" must be applied to genuine believers, for they would be meaningless if addressed to anyone else. Warning an unbeliever not to fall away from a faith they never had is nonsensical. These warnings are given to the church, to those who have been "grafted in" and have "tasted the good word of God." The book of Hebrews, in particular, is filled with such admonitions, warning believers not to harden their hearts, not to have an "evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God," and not to "sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth." These are not mere hypothetical scenarios. They are **real dangers for real believers**. To reinterpret these passages as applying only to false professors or those who were never truly saved is to twist the plain meaning of the text to fit a preconceived theological system. The Bible takes the threat of apostasy seriously, and so should we.

Question 44. What does it mean to "make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10) if salvation is already unconditionally guaranteed?

Answer 44. The command in 2 Peter 1:10 to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" is fundamentally at odds with the idea that salvation is unconditionally guaranteed. If a believer's eternal destiny were already fixed by an irrevocable decree, there would be nothing to "make sure." The command would be redundant. The context of the passage is a call to spiritual growth, urging believers to add to their faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. Peter states that "if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." This shows that assurance is not something to be passively assumed, but **actively confirmed through a life of faith and fruitfulness**. Making our calling and election sure is the process of demonstrating the reality of our profession through our conduct. It is by walking in the light that we have fellowship with God and the assurance that we are His. The command presupposes that neglect can lead to falling, making diligence a vital component of the Christian life.

Question 45. Who are the "overcomers" in the book of Revelation, and what does their struggle imply about the Christian life?

Answer 45. The "overcomers" in the book of Revelation are the true, persevering saints who maintain their faith in Jesus Christ and their testimony in the face of intense persecution, temptation, and deception. The promises to the seven churches are all directed specifically to "him that overcometh." They will eat of the tree of life, receive a crown of life, be clothed in white raiment, and have their names confessed before the Father. The very concept of "overcoming" implies a **real and arduous struggle**. It is not a guaranteed outcome for all who profess faith, but a victory won by those who endure to the end. Revelation 12:11 reveals how they overcome: "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Their security is not in an unconditional decree, but in their active reliance on Christ's sacrifice and their unwavering commitment to His truth, even to the point of martyrdom. The Christian life is a battlefield, not a playground, and only those who fight the good fight of faith will receive the victor's crown.

Question 46. How does the parable of the sower (Matthew 13) illustrate the different responses to the Gospel and the possibility of falling away?

Answer 46. The parable of the sower in Matthew 13 is a masterful illustration of the different initial responses to the Gospel and the stark reality that not all who begin well will endure. Of the four types of soil that receive the seed of the Word, only one produces lasting fruit. The other three represent those who fall away. The wayside hearer has the word snatched away immediately. The stony ground represents a person who receives the word with joy, showing an initial, genuine response, but **when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended** and falls away. The thorny ground represents one who also receives the word, but "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." This parable powerfully demonstrates that an initial profession of faith is not a guarantee of final salvation. It shows that real conversion is evidenced not by a fleeting emotional response, but by a faith that takes deep root and perseveres through trials to bear fruit.

Question 47. What is the nature of the "fruit" that believers are expected to bear, and what happens to branches that do not bear fruit (John 15)?

Answer 47. The "fruit" that believers are expected to bear, as described in John 15 and elsewhere, is the outward evidence of a life transformed by the Holy Spirit. It includes both character (the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, etc.) and conduct (good works and leading others to Christ). This fruit is the natural result of abiding in Christ, the true vine. However, Jesus gives a sobering warning in John 15:2: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." This is a direct statement made to His disciples, indicating that a fruitless connection to Christ is not a permanent one. The branch is "in him," signifying a real connection, not a false profession. Yet, **if it fails to bear fruit, it is subject to removal and judgment**. This passage is a strong refutation of the idea that all who are once "in Christ" are eternally secure regardless of their life's testimony. It teaches that a living, vital, fruit-bearing relationship is the condition for remaining in the vine.

Question 48. How does the teaching of Ezekiel 18 and 33, where a righteous man can turn from his righteousness and die in his sin, inform the doctrine of perseverance?

Answer 48. The teaching in Ezekiel 18 and 33 provides a clear Old Testament foundation for the doctrine of conditional security and serves as a powerful corrective to the idea of unconditional perseverance. God states with unambiguous clarity: "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity... all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." This principle of **individual, final accountability** directly informs our understanding of perseverance. It establishes that a person's ultimate standing before God is based on their state at the end of their life, not on a past period of righteousness. While the New Covenant operates on the basis of grace through faith, the principle of falling from a state of righteousness remains. The warnings in Hebrews and elsewhere in the New Testament echo this theme. Ezekiel shows that God has always judged based on a person's final spiritual condition, a principle that undermines any doctrine of guaranteed perseverance.

Question 49. What is the "sin unto death" mentioned in 1 John 5:16, and does it have implications for the security of the believer?

Answer 49. The "sin unto death" mentioned in 1 John 5:16 refers to a state of willful, persistent, and unrepentant sin committed by someone who was once a believer. John distinguishes between "sin which is not unto death," for which believers should pray for one another, and this more grievous "sin unto death." While the exact nature of the sin is not specified, the context suggests it is a deliberate turning away from the truth, a state of apostasy from which there is no repentance. This has profound implications for the security of the believer. It clearly indicates that a person can reach a point of no return, a state of sin so hardened that it leads to spiritual death and the forfeiture of salvation. The existence of such a sin proves that **the believer's security is not unconditional**. It is a solemn warning that continued, willful sin can sever one's relationship with God and lead to ultimate destruction, a reality that contradicts the notion that a true believer can never finally fall away.

Question 50. How do we reconcile the promises of God's keeping power (John 10:28-29) with the warnings against apostasy?

Answer 50. The promises of God's keeping power and the warnings against apostasy are reconciled by understanding that God's power keeps those who **remain in a state of faith**. In John 10:28-29, Jesus promises, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." This is a glorious promise of security. However, the promise is made to "my sheep," who are defined in the preceding verse as those who "hear my voice... and they follow me." The keeping power of God is not an unconditional, mechanical force that prevents a believer from choosing to walk away. It is a powerful preservation for those who continue to hear and follow the Shepherd. The warnings against apostasy are addressed to those same sheep, cautioning them against the real danger of ceasing to follow. Therefore, there is no contradiction. God's hand is powerful enough to hold any who wish to be held, but it will not hold by force one who is determined to leave. Security is in Christ, and we remain secure as we abide in Him.

The Logical and Moral Implications of Calvinism

Question 51. If God has unconditionally predestined some to salvation and others to damnation, can He be considered the author of sin?

Answer 51. If God has unconditionally and eternally predestined every event, including the fall of man and every subsequent sinful act, then the conclusion that He is the author of sin becomes logically inescapable. A system of absolute determinism, where every choice and action is merely the outworking of a divine decree, removes secondary causation and places the ultimate responsibility for all things, including evil, squarely on God. To say that God decrees a sinful act but is not culpable for it is a philosophical shell game. If a man builds a machine, programs it to perform a destructive act, and sets it in motion, who is responsible for the destruction? Is it the machine, or the man who programmed it? The Bible, in contrast, presents a God who is holy, who tempts no man, and in whom there is no darkness at all. He permits sin, and can even use it for His redemptive purposes, but **He never causes or decrees it**. To make God the author of sin is to malign His character and contradict the plain testimony of Scripture, which places the responsibility for sin on the free choices of His creatures.

Question 52. How does the doctrine of unconditional reprobation affect our understanding of God's justice and fairness?

Answer 52. The doctrine of unconditional reprobation—the idea that God, from eternity, decreed to create certain individuals for the sole purpose of damning them, without any regard to their choices—presents a grave challenge to the biblical understanding of God's justice and fairness. It portrays God as a celestial tyrant who condemns creatures for a fate He Himself ordained. This is not the justice of the Bible, which judges men "according to their works" and holds them accountable for their own rebellion. Biblical justice is rooted in righteousness and impartiality. How can it be just to punish a person for being what they were unalterably decreed to be? It turns the final judgment into a mere formality, the execution of a sentence passed before the defendant even existed. This view is a caricature of divine justice, making God seem more like the capricious deities of pagan mythology than the righteous Judge of all the earth who will, by definition, **do what is right**.

Question 53. If a person's eternal destiny is fixed, what is the purpose of the final judgment according to works?

Answer 53. If a person's eternal destiny is immutably fixed by an unconditional, pre-temporal decree, the final judgment according to works is rendered a **theatrical and largely pointless exercise**. The Bible states clearly that all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body. This judgment is presented as a genuine assessment, where the books are opened and men are judged based on what is written in them. However, if the verdict of "saved" or "damned" was determined before the foundation of the world, then the works are not the basis for the judgment, but merely the evidence of the pre-ordained decree. The judgment becomes a public demonstration rather than a true reckoning. It loses its gravity and its function as a moment of ultimate accountability. The biblical portrayal, however, is of a real judgment

where works are the evidence of a person's true faith or lack thereof, which in turn determines their just reward or punishment.

Question 54. How does the doctrine of limited atonement impact the sincerity of God's universal offer of the Gospel?

Answer 54. The doctrine of limited atonement directly undermines the sincerity of God's universal offer of the Gospel. If Christ died only for the elect, then the "whosoever will" invitations of the Bible become a profound and troubling paradox. It means God commands His servants to make a universal offer of a salvation that is not universally available. It is like a king offering a pardon to every prisoner in a dungeon, while knowing full well that the pardon was only written for a select few. How can such an offer be considered genuine or sincere? The Bible, however, presents a God who takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" and who earnestly pleads with sinners to turn and live. The sincerity of the gospel offer requires a **corresponding sincerity in its provision**. Christ's death was sufficient for all, which is why the invitation can be honestly extended to all. Limited atonement creates a God who speaks with a forked tongue, offering a salvation with one hand that He has withheld with the other.

Question 55. If all things are decreed by God, does this render prayer, evangelism, and other means of grace unnecessary?

Answer 55. While adherents of deterministic systems would argue otherwise, the logical conclusion of a belief that all things are unalterably decreed by God is that prayer, evangelism, and other means of grace are rendered largely superfluous. If the number and identity of the elect are fixed and their salvation is irresistibly secured, then why evangelize? The elect will be saved regardless, and the non-elect cannot be saved. Why pray for the salvation of the lost if their fate is already sealed? Why strive for holiness if our ongoing growth in following Christ is an inevitable process? While theologians may create complex systems to justify these activities, the **motivational force behind them is severely weakened**. The Bible, in contrast, presents these means of grace as vital and effective. Paul travailed for souls to be saved. James says the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." These actions are presented as genuinely changing outcomes, a view that is difficult to reconcile with a universe where every outcome is already set in stone.

Question 56. How does the Calvinistic system address the problem of evil and suffering in the world?

Answer 56. The Calvinistic system addresses the problem of evil and suffering by subsuming it under the umbrella of God's all-encompassing, sovereign decree. In this view, evil and suffering do not exist outside of God's will, but are ordained by Him for His ultimate glory and the greater good. While this provides a comprehensive answer, it does so at a great cost: it makes God the ultimate author of evil. To say that God decreed the fall, and every subsequent act of sin and suffering, is to attribute to Him the very things His nature abhors. The Bible, conversely, presents a God who is holy and separate from sin. It attributes evil to the rebellious choices of created beings, both angelic and human. While God is sovereign over evil, able to limit it and use it for His purposes (as with Joseph's brothers or the crucifixion), **He is never its originator**. The

Calvinistic solution, while logically tidy, paints a picture of God that is morally troubling and difficult to reconcile with the God of love and light revealed in Jesus Christ.

Question 57. Does the doctrine of unconditional election foster humility or a sense of spiritual elitism?

Answer 57. While proponents argue that the doctrine of unconditional election should foster humility, its practical and psychological tendency is often toward a sense of **spiritual elitism**. The belief that one has been chosen by God from eternity for salvation, for no reason inherent in themselves, while the rest of humanity has been passed over for damnation, can easily lead to a "we-four-and-no-more" mentality. It can create a spiritual caste system of the "elect" and the "reprobate." True biblical humility comes not from believing we are the passive recipients of an exclusive, arbitrary choice, but from recognizing that we are all equally unworthy sinners who have been offered an astonishing gift of grace. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. Humility is born from the knowledge that God's mercy was available to all, and we are saved only because we cast ourselves upon that mercy, not because we were the secret favorites in a divine lottery.

Question 58. How does the belief in irresistible grace affect personal responsibility and the motivation for holy living?

Answer 58. The belief in irresistible grace, coupled with the perseverance of the saints, can have a detrimental effect on a believer's sense of personal responsibility and motivation for holy living. If one's salvation is not only initiated but also infallibly carried to completion by an irresistible force, the urgency of the biblical commands to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," to "strive," and to "fight the good fight of faith" is diminished. It can foster a passive approach to our ongoing growth in following Christ, an attitude of "let go and let God" that is foreign to the New Testament's emphasis on diligent effort and watchfulness. Furthermore, it can lead to a dangerous complacency regarding sin. If a person believes they are eternally secure regardless of their conduct, the **motivation to vigorously pursue holiness can be eroded**. The Bible, however, motivates us with both the promise of reward for obedience and the solemn warning of the consequences of disobedience, creating a healthy, dynamic tension that promotes a life of active, responsible faith.

Question 59. If God is the ultimate cause of all things, including unbelief, how can He be said to take "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11)?

Answer 59. The biblical declaration that God takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" is irreconcilable with a system where God is the ultimate cause of all things, including the unbelief that leads to that death. If God eternally and unchangeably decreed that a specific person would live in unbelief and be damned, and then brought this decree to pass through irresistible means, it is a logical contradiction to then claim He takes no pleasure in the outcome He Himself ordained. It would mean God's stated desire is in direct opposition to His secret, decretive will. This portrays God as being internally conflicted or insincere. The plain meaning of the text in Ezekiel is that God's heart is genuinely oriented toward life and salvation. He pleads with the wicked to "turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" This is the plea of a loving God who has **made**

salvation possible for all, not the pronouncement of a fatalistic deity who takes no pleasure in the execution of his own immutable, damning decree.

Question 60. How does the Calvinistic understanding of God's sovereignty compare with the biblical portrayal of God as a relational being who interacts with and responds to His creation?

Answer 60. The Calvinistic understanding of God's sovereignty as a meticulous, deterministic control of all events stands in stark contrast to the biblical portrayal of God as a deeply relational being who genuinely interacts with and responds to His creation. The Bible is filled with stories of God responding to human prayer, relenting from judgment because of repentance (as with Nineveh), and engaging in genuine dialogue with His people. He is a God who can be grieved, who rejoices, and who pleads with His children. The deterministic view of sovereignty tends to reduce these interactions to a divine script, where God is merely acting out a part in a play He wrote from eternity. It replaces the living, dynamic God of the Bible with the "unmoved mover" of Greek philosophy. The biblical God, however, is not a distant, impassive force. He is a **Father who has sovereignly chosen to enter into a real, responsive relationship** with the beings He created in His own image, a relationship where our choices and prayers genuinely matter.

Historical and Textual Considerations

Question 61. Is the TULIP framework a direct summary of biblical teaching, or is it a later theological construct developed by the followers of John Calvin?

Answer 61. The TULIP framework (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints) is not a direct summary of biblical teaching, but a **later theological construct** developed to summarize the judgments of the Synod of Dort in 1618-1619. This synod was convened to respond to the teachings of the followers of Jacobus Arminius. While John Calvin's writings certainly laid the groundwork for these doctrines, the five-point acronym itself was not formulated by him and only became popularized much later. It represents a systematic, philosophical attempt to codify certain aspects of God's sovereignty, but it does so by isolating specific verses from their broader context and creating a logically coherent but biblically unbalanced system. It is a product of post-Reformation debate, not a summary that would be naturally derived from a plain, topical reading of the entire Bible.

Question 62. How did the early church fathers before Augustine understand the doctrines of free will, election, and grace?

Answer 62. The overwhelming consensus of the early church fathers before Augustine of Hippo (late 4th century) was a belief in human free will and a rejection of deterministic predestination. Figures like Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria consistently taught that humans possess the freedom to choose between good and evil and are responsible for their choices. They understood election as being based on God's foreknowledge of who would believe, and grace as a divine assistance that enables, but does not coerce, the human will. The doctrines of an inherited guilt from Adam that destroys free will and an unconditional, individual election to

salvation or damnation were **largely foreign to the first three centuries of Christian thought**. Augustine's later shift toward a more deterministic view, influenced by his battle with Pelagianism and his background in Manichaean philosophy, represented a significant departure from the traditional understanding of the early church.

Question 63. What is the "cherry-picking fallacy," and how might it apply to the way different theological systems use Scripture?

Answer 63. The "cherry-picking fallacy," also known as the fallacy of incomplete evidence, is the act of pointing to individual cases or data that seem to confirm a particular position, while ignoring a significant portion of related cases or data that may contradict that position. This fallacy is a common pitfall in theological debate. Many systematic theologies, including Calvinism, are constructed by **gathering a specific set of verses** that, when read in isolation, appear to support their core tenets. For example, verses on God's sovereignty are emphasized, while verses on human responsibility and the universal call to salvation are reinterpreted or minimized to fit the system. A true topical Bible study, however, demands that *all* relevant verses on a subject be gathered and harmonized. The cherry-picking fallacy builds a seemingly strong case on a weak foundation, creating a doctrine that cannot stand up to the weight of the whole counsel of God.

Question 64. How does the doctrine of the Book of Life, as presented throughout the Bible, challenge the foundational tenets of Calvinism?

Answer 64. The biblical doctrine of the Book of Life presents a profound and direct challenge to the foundational tenets of Calvinism, particularly unconditional election and the perseverance of the saints. The Bible speaks of this book as a heavenly registry, but crucially, it reveals that names can be **blotted out** (Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5). This single fact is devastating to the Calvinistic system. If a name can be removed, it means that the person's inclusion in the book was conditional, not an unchangeable, eternal decree. It implies that salvation can be forfeited. Furthermore, the idea that names were written from the foundation of the world, yet some are later removed, perfectly harmonizes God's universal, loving provision with individual responsibility and the necessity of persevering faith. It suggests a God who desires all to be saved, but who will not keep the name of one who ultimately turns away from Him in unrepentant sin.

Question 65. What is the significance of the fact that the term "elect" in the Gospels and Romans often refers specifically to the nation of Israel?

Answer 65. The fact that the term "elect" in the Gospels and Romans often refers specifically to the nation of Israel is of immense significance for proper biblical interpretation. It means that many of the key "proof texts" used to support the doctrine of individual, unconditional election are being taken out of their primary historical and covenantal context. When Jesus speaks of the "elect" in the Olivet Discourse, He is talking about the Jewish people. When Paul discusses election in Romans 9-11, his entire argument revolves around the status of Israel in God's redemptive plan and the inclusion of the Gentiles. To ignore this **national and corporate dimension of election** and read a later, philosophical definition of individual predestination back into these texts is a serious interpretive error. It flattens the rich, salvation-historical narrative of the Bible into a sterile, abstract system and misapplies promises and warnings intended for a specific covenant people.

Question 66. How does a pre-70 AD dating of the New Testament books affect our understanding of prophecies related to Israel and the "end times"?

Answer 66. A pre-70 AD dating of the New Testament books radically affects our understanding of prophecy by grounding many "end times" passages in their immediate historical context: the impending judgment on Jerusalem and the end of the Old Covenant age. Many of the dramatic pronouncements of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) and the symbolic judgments in the book of Revelation can be seen as directly referring to the catastrophic events of the Jewish-Roman War, which culminated in the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. This preterist view does not necessarily deny a future second coming of Christ, but it recognizes that many prophecies had a **near, historical fulfillment** that was profoundly significant for the early church. It shifts the focus from speculative, newspaper-headline eschatology to the reality that the "end of the age" for the apostles was the end of the Mosaic, temple-centric system, making way for the new international covenant in Christ.

Question 67. Are the defining doctrines of Calvinism discoverable by a plain reading of the Bible, or do they require a specific philosophical and theological framework?

Answer 67. The defining doctrines of Calvinism, particularly the more abstract points like limited atonement and irresistible grace, are not readily discoverable by a plain, inductive reading of the Bible. They require a **specific philosophical and theological framework** to be read into the text. A person reading the Bible for the first time, without prior indoctrination, would naturally conclude from the "whosoever" passages that the gospel offer is for everyone. They would conclude from the numerous warnings that falling away is a real possibility. The TULIP system is a product of deductive reasoning, starting with a philosophical premise about God's absolute, meticulous sovereignty and then interpreting all of Scripture through that lens. It is a logically coherent system, but its coherence is imposed upon the text, not derived naturally from it. The need for extensive theological training and commentary to understand and defend the system is itself evidence that it is not the plain teaching of the Word of God.

Question 68. How have different Bible translations, based on different manuscript traditions (e.g., Textus Receptus vs. Alexandrian), influenced the interpretation of key verses related to Calvinism?

Answer 68. While the core tenets of the debate can be argued from any major translation, the differences between manuscript traditions can subtly influence the interpretation of key verses. The Textus Receptus, which underlies the King James Version, often contains readings that are more supportive of a universal atonement and resistible grace. In contrast, the Alexandrian manuscripts (like Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), which form the basis for most modern translations (NIV, ESV, etc.), sometimes have variant readings that can be interpreted to favor a more deterministic view. For example, some scholars argue that certain omissions or changes in the Alexandrian text can weaken the emphasis on human response or the universal scope of certain passages. While no single variant decides the entire debate, the cumulative effect of these textual differences can **create a slightly different theological flavor**, making it easier for a particular system to find support in one manuscript tradition over another. This highlights the importance of being aware of textual criticism when engaging in deep doctrinal study.

Question 69. What role did the philosophical systems of Stoicism and Manichaeism play in the development of Augustine's theology?

Answer 69. The philosophical systems of Stoicism and Manichaeism played a significant, though complex, role in the development of Augustine's later theology, particularly his views on predestination and free will. Before his conversion, Augustine was a Manichaean, a dualistic religion that taught a form of fatalism and the idea of two eternally warring principles (good and evil). This background likely predisposed him to deterministic thinking. More subtly, the broader intellectual climate was saturated with Greco-Roman philosophy, including Stoicism, which held to a concept of an all-encompassing divine reason (Logos) and a form of fate that governed all things. While Augustine would have rejected these pagan systems outright after his conversion, their **underlying thought structures and assumptions about determinism and causality** appear to have been repurposed and "baptized" into his Christian framework, especially in his later writings against Pelagius. This led him to formulate a doctrine of predestination that was a departure from the earlier church fathers and bore a structural resemblance to the pagan fatalism he had once renounced.

Question 70. How does the message of John the Baptist to the nation of Israel serve as a refutation of the core principles of TULIP?

Answer 70. The message of John the Baptist serves as a concise and powerful refutation of the core principles of TULIP. First, he confronts the "elect" nation of Israel, warning them that their lineage from Abraham (their election) does not guarantee their salvation, which challenges **Unconditional Election**. Second, he demands "fruits meet for repentance," indicating that a human response is necessary and that grace is not **Irresistible**. Third, his warning that the axe is already at the root of the tree and that fruitless trees will be "hewn down, and cast into the fire" directly contradicts the **Perseverance of the Saints**, showing that even the elect can be cut off. Fourth, by implication, his universal call to repentance suggests a universal problem and a universally available solution, which stands against the idea of a **Limited Atonement**. Finally, his entire ministry, which calls for a choice and a response, presumes a will that is not in a state of **Total Inability** to respond to God's command. In his brief ministry, John dismantled the very pillars upon which this later system would be built.

The Church and the Christian Life

Question 71. How does one's view of salvation (Calvinist vs. non-Calvinist) impact their approach to evangelism and missions?

Answer 71. One's view of salvation significantly impacts their approach to evangelism and missions, particularly in its urgency and methodology. A consistent Calvinist, who believes that the elect have been unconditionally chosen and will be irresistibly drawn, may view evangelism more as a means of "gathering" the pre-destined elect than as a desperate plea to the perishing. The urgency can be diminished if the outcome is already guaranteed. The non-Calvinist, believing that any person can be saved but can also reject the offer, tends to approach evangelism with a greater sense of urgency and a focus on persuasion, pleading with sinners to be reconciled to God. The

message itself can also differ. The Calvinist may emphasize God's sovereign choice, while the non-Calvinist will likely emphasize the "**whosoever will**" nature of the invitation and the personal responsibility of the hearer to repent and believe. While both may be active in missions, their underlying motivation and the content of their appeal are shaped by their foundational beliefs about who can be saved and how.

Question 72. What is the biblical model for church government, and how does it compare to the hierarchical structures often found in denominational churches?

Answer 72. The biblical model for church government, as seen in the New Testament, is simple, local, and non-hierarchical. It is centered on the local assembly, which is autonomous and led by a plurality of elders (also called bishops or pastors—the terms are used interchangeably) who meet the spiritual qualifications laid out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These elders were responsible for shepherding and teaching the flock. They were assisted by deacons, who were responsible for the physical needs and service of the church. This model stands in stark contrast to the **complex, top-down hierarchical structures** of many modern denominations, with their synods, councils, presidents, and district superintendents. The New Testament knows nothing of a clerical authority structure beyond the local church. The biblical model is one of servant leadership among equals, under the ultimate headship of Jesus Christ, not a corporate-style pyramid of power and control.

Question 73. According to the New Testament, what is the primary purpose of financial offerings in the church?

Answer 73. According to the New Testament, the primary purpose of financial offerings in the church was the **care of the poor and needy within the community of believers**. In the book of Acts, we see the early Christians selling possessions and laying the money at the apostles' feet for distribution to anyone who had need. Paul's major fundraising effort among the Gentile churches was specifically "for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." The collection was for "good works," primarily supporting widows, orphans, the sick, and those imprisoned for their faith. This biblical model is a far cry from the modern practice where the majority of church budgets are consumed by building mortgages, staff salaries, and administrative costs. The New Testament concept of offering was rooted in charity and mutual support, a "widow and orphan fund," not in the maintenance of an institution or the payment of a professional clergy.

Question 74. How should believers respond to those who teach a different gospel or a different view of salvation?

Answer 74. The Bible gives clear and firm instructions on how believers should respond to those who teach a different gospel. The primary response is **separation**. Paul's anathema in Galatians 1:8-9 is severe: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." In Romans 16:17, he commands believers to "mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." 2 John 10-11 goes even further, instructing not to receive such a person into your house or even bid them God speed, lest you become a partaker in their evil deeds. This is not a call to be rude or hateful, but a necessary measure to protect the purity of the church and

the truth of the gospel. The response is not endless debate, but a clear identification of the error and a decisive separation from its influence.

Question 75. What is the role of "good works" in the life of a believer, and how do they relate to salvation?

Answer 75. The role of "good works" in the life of a believer is that of **necessary evidence, not the saving cause**. The Bible is unequivocally clear that we are saved by grace through faith, "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9). However, the very next verse states that we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Good works are the inevitable and natural fruit of a life that has been genuinely regenerated by the Holy Spirit. They are the proof of the reality of our faith, for as James 2:26 says, "faith without works is dead." They do not contribute to our justification, but they demonstrate it. They are not the root of our salvation, but the fruit that grows from it. A life devoid of good works calls into question the authenticity of one's profession of faith.

Question 76. How does the concept of "Christian liberty" apply to matters of conscience and theological disagreement?

Answer 76. Christian liberty is the freedom from the bondage of sin and the condemnation of the law that is granted to believers in Christ. In matters of conscience and theological disagreement, this liberty should be exercised with wisdom, love, and a deep respect for fellow believers. Paul's teaching in Romans 14 provides the guiding principle: in non-essential matters (like eating certain foods or observing certain days), believers should not judge or despise one another. Each person must be "fully persuaded in his own mind." Our liberty should never be used as an "occasion to the flesh" or as a stumbling block to a weaker brother. This means that while we may be free to hold a certain theological view, we must present it with grace and not use it to create division or lord it over others. In the essentials of the gospel, there must be unity. In the non-essentials, there must be **liberty**. In all things, there must be charity.

Question 77. What does the Bible teach about the assurance of salvation, and on what basis can a believer have this assurance?

Answer 77. The Bible teaches that a believer can have a genuine and solid assurance of salvation, but this assurance is not based on a one-time decision in the past or a belief in an unconditional decree. Rather, biblical assurance is a present and ongoing confidence rooted in three things. First, it is based on the **objective truth of God's promises** and the finished work of Christ. We trust what God has said in His Word. Second, it is confirmed by the **internal witness of the Holy Spirit**, who bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Third, and crucially, it is evidenced by a **transformed life**. 1 John was written specifically so that believers may "know that ye have eternal life," and the tests it provides are moral (do we walk in the light and obey His commandments?) and social (do we love the brethren?). True assurance is a cord of three strands: trusting God's promise, listening to the Spirit's witness, and seeing the fruit of salvation in our own lives.

Question 78. How should a local church practice discipline, especially in cases of serious sin or heresy?

Answer 78. The practice of church discipline, as outlined in the New Testament, is a necessary and loving process designed to restore a straying believer and to protect the purity of the local church. The model given by Jesus in Matthew 18 involves a progressive approach. First, the sinning brother should be confronted privately. If he does not listen, one or two others should be brought as witnesses. If he still refuses to repent, the matter should be brought before the entire church. If he refuses to hear the church, he is to be treated as an outsider, a "heathen man and a publican." In cases of serious, public sin, such as the immorality described in 1 Corinthians 5, or the teaching of heresy, the response is more immediate: the person is to be removed from the fellowship ("put away from among yourselves that wicked person") to prevent the "leaven" from spreading. The goal is always **redemptive**, but the means require a firm and decisive separation from unrepentant sin and false doctrine.

Question 79. What is the relationship between the individual believer's conscience and the authority of the church?

Answer 79. The relationship between the individual believer's conscience and the authority of the church is one of respectful submission, but not blind obedience. The believer's ultimate allegiance is to Christ and His Word, and the conscience, informed by the Holy Spirit and Scripture, is the faculty through which that allegiance is exercised. Church leaders are to be honored and obeyed as they faithfully teach the Word of God. However, as the Bereans demonstrated in Acts 17, it is noble and right to **test all teachings against the Scriptures** to see if they are true. No church or leader has the authority to command a believer to violate their conscience or to believe something that contradicts the plain teaching of the Bible. The individual conscience, when held captive to the Word of God, is the final arbiter. The authority of the church is derivative; it comes from its faithfulness to the authority of Christ and His Word.

Question 80. How can believers from different theological perspectives maintain unity and fellowship in the body of Christ?

Answer 80. Believers from different theological perspectives can maintain unity and fellowship by focusing on the core essentials of the Christian faith and exercising grace and liberty in the non-essentials. The foundation of unity is a shared belief in the foundational truths of the gospel: the deity of Christ, His substitutionary atonement, His bodily resurrection, and salvation by grace through faith. On these matters, there can be no compromise. However, on secondary and tertiary issues—such as the precise mechanics of election, the timing of eschatological events, or modes of worship—there must be room for charitable disagreement. The key is to distinguish between **doctrinal mountains and theological molehills**. Unity does not mean uniformity of thought on every single issue. It means loving one another, bearing with one another's differences, and striving to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," all while earnestly contending for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints.

Challenging Key Calvinist Proof Texts

Question 81. In Romans 9, is Paul discussing individual salvation or God's sovereign purposes in the history of redemption through Israel?

Answer 81. A careful reading of Romans 9 in its full context reveals that Paul's primary subject is not the eternal salvation or damnation of individuals, but **God's sovereign purposes in the history of redemption as worked out through the nation of Israel**. The chapter is Paul's answer to the question of whether God's promises to Israel have failed, given that the majority of the nation had rejected their Messiah. Paul's use of Jacob and Esau, and Pharaoh, are illustrations of God's sovereign right to choose nations and individuals for specific roles within His historical plan, not proof texts for an unconditional, pre-temporal decree of salvation. He is demonstrating that God's purpose has always been accomplished through a chosen remnant, and that He is now sovereignly grafting in the Gentiles. To interpret this chapter as a blueprint for individual predestination is to ignore the central theme of the entire section (Romans 9-11), which is the relationship between Israel and the church in God's unfolding plan.

Question 82. In John 6:44 ("No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him"), does the word "draw" imply an irresistible force, or a wooing and enabling?

Answer 82. While the Greek word for "draw" (*helkuo*) can mean to drag by force, its usage in Scripture and the broader context of the Gospel suggests a meaning closer to a powerful wooing and enabling, not an irresistible force. In John 12:32, Jesus uses the same word, saying, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will **draw all men** unto me." Clearly, not all men are irresistibly saved, so the "drawing" cannot be coercive. It refers to the universal, magnetic appeal of the cross. Furthermore, the Bible is clear that this divine drawing can be resisted. Stephen accused the Jewish leaders of always resisting the Holy Ghost. Therefore, the drawing of the Father in John 6:44 is the necessary, divine initiative that overcomes human inability and makes it possible for a person to come to Christ, but it is not a violation of the human will. It is a powerful, life-giving summons that can be either accepted or rejected.

Question 83. In Acts 13:48 ("as many as were ordained to eternal life believed"), does "ordained" refer to a pre-temporal decree or a present disposition of the heart?

Answer 83. The interpretation of "ordained" in Acts 13:48 hinges on the meaning of the Greek word *tasso*. While it can mean "appointed" or "decreed," it can also mean "disposed," "inclined," or "arranged." Given the context, it is highly probable that it refers to a **present disposition of the heart**, not a pre-temporal, fatalistic decree. The verse describes the reaction of the Gentiles in Antioch to the preaching of the gospel. In contrast to the blaspheming Jews who judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, these Gentiles were well-disposed, receptive, and inclined toward the message they were hearing. Their hearts were prepared by the Holy Spirit to believe. Therefore, the verse can be understood to mean, "as many as were disposed to eternal life believed." This reading harmonizes with the rest of Scripture's emphasis on human response and avoids the theological problems created by reading a deterministic decree into the text.

Question 84. When Jesus says, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me" (John 17:9), is He speaking about the scope of His atonement or the specific focus of His high priestly prayer?

Answer 84. In John 17:9, Jesus is speaking about the **specific focus of His high priestly prayer**, not the scope of His atonement. This entire chapter is an intimate prayer of the Son to the Father on the eve of His crucifixion. In this moment, His focus is on the disciples who were with Him and on all future believers who would come to faith through their testimony. It is a prayer for their protection, sanctification, and unity. It is not a theological statement limiting the efficacy of His impending death. Elsewhere, the Bible is abundantly clear that Christ is the "propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). To use this specific, focused prayer to argue for a limited atonement is to take the verse out of its immediate context and force it to contradict the plain teaching of other scriptures.

Question 85. In Ephesians 1:4-5, are believers chosen "in him" before the foundation of the world for salvation, or for the purpose of being holy and blameless?

Answer 85. Ephesians 1:4-5 teaches that believers were chosen "in him" before the foundation of the world for a specific purpose: **that they "should be holy and without blame before him in love."** The focus of the election described here is the believer's sanctification and ultimate glorification, not an unconditional election to salvation itself. The passage goes on to say we are "predestinated unto the adoption of children." This is about the destination and privileged position of those who are in Christ. The election is corporate—it applies to all who are "in him." The error is to read this as God choosing certain individuals to be placed "in him" while passing over others. The biblical teaching is that God made a plan before the world began for what would happen to everyone who, by faith, entered into union with Christ. The choice is to be "in Christ," and the result of that choice is this glorious, predestined inheritance.

Question 86. How should we understand the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" and "vessels of mercy" in Romans 9:22-23?

Answer 86. The "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy" in Romans 9 must be understood within the chapter's context of God's sovereign dealings with nations in history, particularly Israel and the Gentiles. The "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" are not individuals predestined to hell from eternity, but those, like Pharaoh or the unbelieving portion of Israel, who by their own persistent rebellion make themselves fit for God's judgment. The Greek verb for "fitted" is in a middle or passive voice, suggesting they fitted themselves for destruction. In contrast, the "vessels of mercy" are those whom God "had **afore prepared** unto glory." Here, the verb is active—God actively prepares them. These are the believing remnant of Israel and the called Gentiles. The passage is not about an arbitrary, eternal decree, but about how God responds to human rebellion and faith within the unfolding of His redemptive plan, demonstrating both His wrath and His glorious mercy.

Question 87. Does Philippians 2:13 ("For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure") negate the role of human choice and effort?

Answer 87. Philippians 2:13 does not negate human choice and effort; it establishes the divine foundation for it. The verse must be read in conjunction with the preceding verse: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you..." The two clauses are presented as complementary, not contradictory. It is precisely **because God is at work in us** that we are able to work. His internal work of grace enables our external work of obedience. The verse teaches the synergy of the divine and the human in the process of our ongoing growth in following Christ. It does not teach a divine monergism where the believer is merely a passive vessel. God provides the desire ("to will") and the power ("to do"), but the believer is still commanded to "work out" what God is working in. It is a beautiful picture of partnership, not a negation of human responsibility.

Question 88. In John 10:26, does Jesus say that people do not believe because they are not His sheep, or that they are not His sheep because they do not believe?

Answer 88. In John 10:26, Jesus says, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." At first glance, this seems to support the idea that a person's status as a sheep precedes their belief. However, the grammar and the broader context suggest the opposite. The reason they are not His sheep is demonstrated by their unbelief. Being a "sheep" is not an abstract, pre-ordained status, but a description of a relationship characterized by hearing the Shepherd's voice and following Him. Jesus's next words are, "My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me." Therefore, the statement is a description of their present condition: **their unbelief is the very evidence that they are not in a relationship with Him.** They are not His sheep precisely because they refuse to believe and follow. It is not that they are unable to believe because of a secret decree, but that their willful unbelief excludes them from the flock.

Question 89. How does the immediate context of Romans 3:10-18 ("There is none righteous, no, not one") inform our understanding of its application to all of humanity?

Answer 89. The immediate context of Romans 3:10-18 is crucial for its proper application. Paul is building a legal case to prove the universal sinfulness of all humanity, **both Jew and Gentile**, in order to demonstrate that no one can be justified by the works of the Law. He quotes a series of Old Testament passages to show that everyone, without exception, has fallen short of God's standard and is under the condemnation of sin. The purpose of this passage is to establish the universal *need* for salvation, not to define the doctrine of *inability* to believe. It is a diagnosis of the human condition, showing that all are guilty and in need of a righteousness that comes from outside themselves—the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ. To use this passage to argue that no unregenerate person can even seek God or respond to His grace is to press it beyond its intended purpose, which is to level the ground at the foot of the cross and show that all are equally in need of the Gospel.

Question 90. When the Bible speaks of God "hardening" hearts, does it mean that He actively creates unbelief, or that He gives people over to their own rebellious choices?

Answer 90. When the Bible speaks of God "hardening" hearts, it does not mean that He actively creates or infuses unbelief into a neutral or willing heart. Rather, it is a judicial act whereby He **gives a person over to the rebellious choices they have already made.** The classic example is

Pharaoh, where the text says both that Pharaoh hardened his own heart and that God hardened it. Pharaoh first set his will against God's. In response, God confirmed him in his rebellion, removing His restraining mercy and allowing the natural consequences of Pharaoh's pride to run their course. This is consistent with Romans 1, where, because people "did not like to retain God in their knowledge," God "gave them over to a reprobate mind." The hardening is a consequence of, not the cause of, human rebellion. It is a terrifying judgment, but it is a just one, as it is a response to a person's persistent and willful rejection of God's authority and grace.

Synthesis and Conclusion

Question 91. After examining all the relevant scriptures, can the five points of TULIP be harmonized with the entirety of biblical teaching?

Answer 91. After a comprehensive examination of all the relevant scriptures, the five points of TULIP cannot be harmonized with the entirety of biblical teaching without significant and unnatural distortion of the text. The system is built upon a selective reading of Scripture, emphasizing verses on God's sovereignty while reinterpreting, explaining away, or ignoring the vast number of passages that teach the universal love of God, the unlimited scope of the atonement, the resistibility of grace, and the conditional nature of salvation. The Bible consistently presents a God who genuinely desires all to be saved, a Christ who died for the whole world, a Holy Spirit who can be resisted, and a salvation that can be forfeited through unbelief and apostasy. TULIP creates a philosophical system that is logically coherent within its own premises, but those premises **do not align with the full counsel of God's Word**. It sacrifices the relational, responsive God of the Bible for the deterministic "unmoved mover" of Greek philosophy.

Question 92. What are the most significant points of tension between the Calvinistic system and a plain reading of the Bible?

Answer 92. The most significant points of tension between the Calvinistic system and a plain reading of the Bible revolve around the character of God and the nature of the gospel offer. First, the doctrine of unconditional reprobation creates a severe tension with the biblical portrayal of a loving and just God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Second, the doctrine of a limited atonement is in direct conflict with the numerous passages stating that Christ died for "all" and for the "whole world," making the universal gospel invitation seem insincere. Third, the doctrine of irresistible grace is contradicted by the clear biblical statements that the Holy Spirit can be resisted. Finally, the doctrine of unconditional perseverance is challenged by the dozens of solemn warnings to believers about the real danger of falling away. A plain reader of the Bible would naturally conclude that **God's offer is genuine for all and that a believer's response and endurance truly matter**, points that the Calvinistic system must redefine to maintain its coherence.

Question 93. How does the "either-or logical fallacy" contribute to the debate between Calvinism and other theological systems?

Answer 93. The "either-or logical fallacy," also known as a false dilemma, is a major contributor to the endless debate between Calvinism and other systems. This fallacy wrongly presents two options as the only possibilities, when in fact other alternatives exist. The debate is often framed as: **either God is absolutely sovereign (Calvinism), or man has free will (Arminianism).** This forces a choice between two extremes and prevents a proper synthesis of the biblical data. The Bible, however, does not present these as mutually exclusive. It teaches both God's absolute sovereignty and man's genuine responsibility. The biblical position is not "either-or," but "both-and." God is so sovereign that He can grant free will to His creatures and still accomplish His purposes. The fallacy forces theologians to build systems that defend one pole of the truth while minimizing the other, leading to imbalanced theologies and perpetual conflict. The solution is to reject the false choice and embrace the full, paradoxical testimony of Scripture.

Question 94. What is the "story of the blind men and the elephant," and how does it illustrate the danger of building a theology on incomplete evidence?

Answer 94. The story of the blind men and the elephant is a powerful parable about the danger of building a conclusion on incomplete evidence. In the story, several blind men touch different parts of an elephant—one touches the trunk and says it is a snake, another touches the leg and says it is a tree, another touches the tail and says it is a rope. Each man's conclusion is based on his limited experience, and all are wrong because none has perceived the whole animal. This perfectly illustrates the danger of building a theological system like Calvinism by focusing on one aspect of God's character—His sovereignty—while neglecting other aspects, like His universal love and His call to human responsibility. By isolating certain verses and building a system around them, **one creates a caricature of the truth**, a theological "snake" or "tree" instead of the magnificent, multifaceted "elephant" of God's full self-revelation in Scripture. It is a cautionary tale against the cherry-picking fallacy and a call to embrace the whole counsel of God.

Question 95. What is the central, unifying message of the Bible regarding God's plan of salvation for humanity?

Answer 95. The central, unifying message of the Bible regarding God's plan of salvation is that God, out of His great love for a fallen world, has made a way for **reconciliation and eternal life through the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ.** This plan, conceived before the foundation of the world, is not a secret, selective rescue mission for a few, but a glorious, universal offer extended to all humanity. The message, from Genesis to Revelation, is one of promise and fulfillment. God promised a Redeemer, and Jesus is that Redeemer. His death on the cross was a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and His resurrection is the guarantee of new life. The condition for entering into this salvation has always been the same: faith in God and His provision. It is a message of grace that is freely offered and must be freely received, a message that breaks down every human barrier and unites all believers into one body in Christ.

Question 96. How does a proper understanding of the Book of Life provide a key to resolving the debate over election and perseverance?

Answer 96. A proper understanding of the Book of Life provides a powerful biblical key to resolving the debate over election and perseverance. The crucial insight is that the Bible speaks

not of names being added to the book, but of names being **blotted out**. This suggests that God, in His universal love and foreknowledge, wrote everyone's name in the book from the foundation of the world, based on the sufficient atonement of the Lamb. This affirms a universal, gracious election. However, this inclusion is conditional. A person's name remains in the book through a life of faith, but can be removed through unrepentant sin and apostasy. This harmonizes the promises of God's keeping power with the solemn warnings against falling away. It affirms that our security is real, yet conditional upon our abiding in Christ. This doctrine single-handedly dismantles the rigid categories of Calvinism, replacing a deterministic system with a dynamic, relational one that upholds both God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

Question 97. What are the practical implications of adopting a Calvinistic worldview for one's personal relationship with God?

Answer 97. Adopting a Calvinistic worldview can have profound and often troubling practical implications for one's personal relationship with God. While some may find comfort in the idea of an unchangeable decree, many struggle with deep-seated anxiety about whether they are truly one of the elect. Assurance can become a matter of intense, introspective speculation rather than a simple trust in Christ's promises. Prayer can feel less like a genuine dialogue and more like a scripted monologue. Furthermore, the view of God as a being who has unconditionally ordained multitudes to damnation can create a sense of fear and distance, making it difficult to relate to Him as a loving and trustworthy Father. It can also lead to a diminished sense of personal responsibility for one's own spiritual growth and a lessened urgency in evangelism. Ultimately, it can replace the **warm, relational God of the Bible** with a cold, distant, and fatalistic deity.

Question 98. How can a topical Bible study method help to cut through the complexities and contradictions of different theological systems?

Answer 98. A topical Bible study method is the most effective tool for cutting through the complexities and contradictions of man-made theological systems. Instead of starting with a system (like TULIP) and trying to find verses to support it, the topical method starts with the Bible alone. By **gathering every verse on a given subject**—such as grace, election, or atonement—and laying them all out together, the student allows Scripture to interpret Scripture. This process naturally exposes the imbalances of systems that have "cherry-picked" certain verses while ignoring others. It forces a harmonization of the full biblical testimony, revealing a more balanced and nuanced truth than any single system can offer. It bypasses centuries of philosophical debate and denominational tradition, empowering the individual believer to build their convictions directly on the solid rock of the whole counsel of God, rather than the shifting sands of human reasoning.

Question 99. What is the ultimate source of assurance and hope for the believer, according to the Bible?

Answer 99. According to the Bible, the ultimate source of assurance and hope for the believer is not found in a speculative, unconditional decree, but in the **person and finished work of Jesus Christ, received and held by a living faith**. Our hope is anchored in His precious blood, which was shed for our sins, and in His glorious resurrection, which guarantees our own. Our assurance

comes from His unwavering promises, such as "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." This objective foundation is then confirmed subjectively by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit and the external evidence of a transformed life of obedience and love. It is a hope that is both a gift and a responsibility—a "blessed hope" that we are commanded to "hold fast" without wavering. It is not a passive certainty, but an active, vibrant trust in the character and promises of a God who is both able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come to Him through Christ.

Question 100. How can we "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) in a spirit of truth and love?

Answer 100. We can "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" by embodying a spirit of both unwavering conviction and profound humility. Contending in truth means we must be diligent students of the Word, building our beliefs on the solid rock of Scripture alone, not on the traditions of men. It requires us to be like the Bereans, testing every teaching, and to be unafraid to identify and separate from doctrines that contradict the core tenets of the gospel. However, contending in love means our defense of the truth must never be motivated by pride, arrogance, or a desire to win arguments. It must be done with a genuine concern for the souls of others and a deep humility that recognizes we too are saved by grace. It means speaking the truth, but speaking it **in love**, with patience and gentleness toward those who are in error, always seeking their restoration rather than their condemnation. It is this balance of doctrinal integrity and gracious character that truly honors Christ and effectively contends for His truth.

Part II: KJV vs. Calvinism: 100 Comprehensive Answers

The Foundation: God's Nature and Man's Condition

Question 1. How does the Bible describe the love of God, and does it present this love as being for all people or only for a select group?

Answer 1. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The love of God, as depicted in the architecture of Scripture, is not a monolithic beam shining on a select few, but a light with a dual aspect: a universal, benevolent love extended to all creation, and a particular, covenantal love reserved for His children. To flatten this reality into a simplistic "either-or" is to misread the divine blueprint. The Bible's most famous declaration, John 3:16, states unequivocally that God "so loved **the world**" that He gave His Son. This is not the language of limitation. This is the language of boundless, sincere compassion. 1 Timothy 2:4 further illuminates this divine disposition, stating God "will have **all men** to be saved." This reveals the heart of the Father—a genuine desire for the redemption of every person. This universal, compassionate love is the foundation for the bona fide offer of the gospel to every creature. However, Scripture also speaks of a special, familial love God has for those who are "in Christ." This is the intimate love of a Father for His adopted children, a love that secures, sanctifies, and glorifies. The error of many theological systems is to make these two aspects of God's love mutually exclusive. They are not. God's particular, saving love for the believer does not negate or render insincere His compassionate, universal love for the world He created. He is both the Savior of all men, and *especially* of those that believe (1 Timothy 4:10). The sun shines on the evil and the good, even while the gardener gives special attention to the plants in his own walled garden.

Scripture References: Deuteronomy 7:7-8, Deuteronomy 10:15, Deuteronomy 10:18, Deuteronomy 23:5, Job 7:17, Isaiah 38:17, Isaiah 43:3, Isaiah 49:15-16, Isaiah 63:9, Jeremiah 31:3, Hosea 11:4, Zephaniah 3:17, Malachi 1:2-3, John 3:16, John 15:9-10, John 16:27, John 17:23, John 17:26, Romans 5:5, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:39, 2 Corinthians 9:7, 2 Corinthians 13:11, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 2:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:16, Titus 3:4-7, Hebrews 12:6, 1 John 2:5, 1 John 3:1, 1 John 4:8-10, 1 John 4:12, 1 John 4:16, 1 John 4:19, Jude 1:21

Anticipated Rebuttals: The most common **rebuttal** centers on verses that appear to teach a selective, particular love. Opponents will immediately point to Malachi 1:3, quoted in Romans 9, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." They argue this proves God chooses to love some and hate others from before birth. This interpretation, however, ignores the context. In both Malachi and Romans, the reference is to **nations** (the Edomites and the Israelites) and their roles in God's redemptive history, not the eternal salvation of the individuals themselves. "Hate" in this Hebrew idiom means "to love less" or "to reject from a place of honor," not an active, malicious hatred. Another common **rebuttal** is Jesus' prayer in John 17:9, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." This is presented as proof that Christ's love and atoning work were not for the world. But this argument confuses the specific focus of His High Priestly prayer for His disciples on the eve of His death with the overall scope of His mission. In that same gospel, Jesus is called the "Saviour of the world" (John 4:42) and it is said He was given so that the "world

through him might be saved" (John 3:17). A specific prayer for His inner circle does not cancel out His stated universal mission.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This limited view of God's love is a cornerstone doctrine in staunchly Calvinistic denominations, such as certain **Presbyterian churches (PCA, OPC), Reformed Baptist churches, and Dutch Reformed churches**. The historical origin of this specific theological framework can be traced to the later writings of **Augustine of Hippo**, particularly after **412 AD**. In his polemics against the Pelagians, Augustine developed a systematic theology of predestination and irresistible grace that necessitated a view of God's saving love as being exclusively for the elect. This was a significant departure from the understanding of the earlier church fathers, who emphasized God's universal love and man's free will. This Augustinian framework was later codified and popularized by **John Calvin** in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (first published in 1536), making it a central pillar of the Protestant Reformed tradition.

Verses of Apparent Support: Malachi 1:2-3, John 17:9, Romans 8:29-30, Romans 9:11-13, Ephesians 1:4-5

Verses of Correction: John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2, Ezekiel 33:11, John 4:42, 1 Timothy 4:10, Titus 2:11, Hebrews 2:9

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The primary logical error is the **False Dilemma** (also known as the either-or fallacy). This fallacy presents two options as the only possibilities, when in fact more options exist. The argument is framed as: either God loves everyone in exactly the same saving way, or He only loves the elect. This ignores the biblically consistent third option: that God possesses different kinds of love, or different expressions of His love. It is like saying a man either loves every woman in the world exactly as he loves his wife, or he does not love his wife at all. This is obviously false. He has a general, benevolent love for humanity, but a special, covenantal, intimate love for his wife. The Bible presents God in the same way.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption rooted in **philosophical determinism**. Determinism is the belief that all events are causally determined by an unbroken chain of preceding events. When applied to theology, it leads to the conclusion that God must meticulously control every outcome, including who is loved and who is not. This removes the possibility of a genuine, universal offer. It forces God's love into a rigid, mechanical framework, where it is not a relational attribute but merely an expression of a pre-ordained, unchangeable decree. This is more akin to the fatalism of the ancient Greek Stoics than the relational Father revealed in the Bible.

Question 2. According to Scripture, what is the extent of God's sovereignty? Does His sovereignty negate human free will and responsibility?

Answer 2. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The sovereignty of God, according to the biblical witness, is absolute, exhaustive, and total. There is not a single molecule in the universe that is outside of His ultimate control; He "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Yet, this absolute sovereignty does not negate or render illusory the reality of human free will and responsibility. The Bible holds these two truths in a perfect, unwavering tension. The same God

who declares, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," also commands humanity, "choose you this day whom ye will serve." This is not a contradiction to be solved, but a divine paradox to be embraced. The critical error of deterministic systems is to assume that for God to be sovereign, man must be a mere automaton. But is a king less sovereign because he grants his subjects the freedom to obey or disobey his laws? Is a master architect less in control because he designs a structure with doors that can be opened or closed? No, his sovereignty is so complete that it **encompasses the free choices of his creatures** within His overarching plan. He can use the free, and even sinful, acts of men—like the selling of Joseph or the crucifixion of Christ—to accomplish His good and redemptive purposes without being the author of their sin. God's sovereignty is not a cosmic puppetry; it is the wise, powerful, and righteous governance of a universe in which He has sovereignly decreed that human choices are real and have eternal consequences.

Scripture References: Genesis 1:1, Genesis 6:5-8, Genesis 18:16-33, Genesis 22, Genesis 50:20, 2 Samuel 24:13-14, 1 Chronicles 29:10-20, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 23, Psalm 51:4, Psalm 139:1-6, Proverbs 15:3, Proverbs 19:21, Isaiah 14:24, Isaiah 46:10, Joel 2:32, John 6:44, Romans 9:19-21, Romans 11:3, Ephesians 1:11, Titus 3:3-7, Hebrews 11:6, Hebrews 12:28, James 1:13-15, 1 Peter 1:17

Anticipated Rebuttals: Opponents will argue that if man has a truly free will, then God cannot be truly sovereign, as a human choice could potentially thwart God's plan. They will cite verses like Romans 9:19, "Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" to argue for a will of God that is always irresistible. This **rebuttal**, however, fails to distinguish between God's **decretive will** (what He decrees will happen, which cannot be thwarted) and His **preceptive will** (what He commands, which can be disobeyed). Jesus' lament over Jerusalem ("how often would I have gathered you... but ye would not!") is a clear example of His preceptive will being resisted. Another **rebuttal** is that if God is not controlling every choice, He cannot guarantee the future. This misunderstands the nature of divine omniscience. God's foreknowledge does not cause an event; it simply knows the event. He knows with perfect certainty every free choice that will ever be made and has woven those choices into His ultimate, unstoppable plan. His sovereignty is not a fragile thing that can be broken by human freedom; it is so magnificent that it incorporates human freedom into its very fabric.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The deterministic view of sovereignty that negates meaningful human choice is a central tenet of **hyper-Calvinism** and is strongly present in many **Reformed Baptist and Presbyterian (PCA, OPC)** traditions. The philosophical underpinnings were laid by **Augustine of Hippo** (post-412 AD), whose system of divine monergism (the idea that God is the sole agent in salvation) effectively minimized the role of the human will. This was a reaction to Pelagianism, which overemphasized human ability. Augustine's view was then systematized by **John Calvin** in the 16th century and further solidified by his successors like **Theodore Beza**. This perspective contrasts sharply with the views of the pre-Augustinian church fathers and other traditions like Wesleyan-Arminianism, which uphold a view of sovereignty that co-exists with human freedom.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:18-21, Ephesians 1:11, Proverbs 16:9, Proverbs 21:1, Isaiah 46:10, Daniel 4:35

Verses of Correction: Deuteronomy 30:19, Joshua 24:15, Matthew 23:37, John 5:40, Acts 7:51, Revelation 22:17

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that divine sovereignty negates human freedom commits the **False Dilemma** fallacy. It incorrectly frames the issue as an "either-or" proposition: either God is 100% in control and man has no freedom, or man has freedom and God is not 100% in control. This ignores the biblically consistent third option that God's 100% sovereign control includes His decree that humans have genuine freedom and responsibility. It's like arguing that a chess grandmaster is not in control of the game because his opponent is allowed to make his own moves. The grandmaster's control is so complete that he anticipates and incorporates every possible move of his opponent into his winning strategy.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption rooted in a **mechanistic view of causality, akin to philosophical determinism**. This view, popularized by figures like the Stoics in ancient Greece and later finding its way into theological systems, sees the universe as a closed system of cause and effect. If God is the first cause, then everything that follows must be a necessary effect of His initial action. This philosophical lens forces the relational, personal God of the Bible into the role of a cosmic programmer or a divine watchmaker who sets everything in motion and simply watches it unfold according to a fixed, unchangeable script, stripping the narrative of any genuine drama or relational interaction.

Question 3. What does it mean that God is "no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), and how does this principle apply to salvation?

Answer 3. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The biblical principle that God is "no respecter of persons" is a cornerstone of His justice and reveals the universal nature of the gospel invitation. It means that God's judgment and His offer of salvation are not based on the external, arbitrary distinctions that humans value. He does not show partiality based on nationality, ethnicity, social class, wealth, or any other outward status. Peter's profound realization in the house of Cornelius was that the wall between Jew and Gentile had been demolished. The criteria for acceptance with God were not lineage or ritual, but a heart-level response: "in every nation he that **feareth him, and worketh righteousness**, is accepted with him." This principle applies directly to salvation by dismantling any notion of an unconditional, selective election. If God were to choose some individuals for salvation and pass over others for no reason other than His own mysterious pleasure, He would be the ultimate "respecter of persons." But the Bible declares the opposite. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. The terms of salvation—repentance and faith in Christ—are the same for everyone. The invitation is extended to all, and acceptance is granted to anyone, regardless of their background, who meets those universal conditions.

Scripture References: Deuteronomy 10:17, Deuteronomy 16:19, 2 Chronicles 19:7, Job 34:19, Proverbs 24:23-24, Matthew 22:16, Luke 20:21, Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11, Galatians 2:6, Galatians 6:7-8, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25, James 2:1-13, 1 Peter 1:17

Anticipated Rebuttals: A common **rebuttal** is that God's choice of Israel as His "elect" nation proves He *is* a respecter of persons. This argument, however, confuses election for a specific

service and role in redemptive history with election for eternal salvation. God chose Abraham and his descendants for the purpose of bringing the Messiah and the oracles of God into the world, a choice that was meant to ultimately bless all nations. It was a choice of function, not of exclusive favoritism for salvation. Another **rebuttal** attempts to redefine "respector of persons" to mean only that God doesn't save people based on their own merit. While it is true that salvation is not based on merit, this redefinition misses the primary meaning of the phrase, which is about impartiality regarding external status (like being a Jew or Gentile). The doctrine of Unconditional Election posits that God chooses one person over their identical neighbor for no discernible reason, which is the very essence of being a respector of persons.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of Unconditional Election, which stands in tension with God being "no respector of persons," is a pillar of **Calvinistic theology**. It is taught in **Reformed, Presbyterian, and some Baptist churches**. The historical roots of this idea are found in the later theology of **Augustine of Hippo** (c. 412 AD), who argued for a selective predestination in his efforts to combat Pelagianism. This was a marked shift from the pre-Augustinian fathers like Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who emphasized God's impartiality. **John Calvin** (1536) adopted and systematized Augustine's view, making it central to Reformed soteriology. This view posits that God's choice in salvation is not based on foreseen faith but on His sovereign, and to human eyes, arbitrary, good pleasure.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:11-16, Deuteronomy 7:6-8, Matthew 11:25-27, John 15:16

Verses of Correction: Acts 10:34-35, Romans 2:11, Colossians 3:25, James 2:1, 1 Peter 1:17, Deuteronomy 10:17, Galatians 3:28

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The attempt to reconcile Unconditional Election with God being "no respector of persons" often involves the **Special Pleading** fallacy. This fallacy occurs when someone applies standards or principles to others while making an exception for their own case. The argument essentially says, "God is impartial and doesn't show favoritism based on human standards... except in the ultimate matter of salvation, where He does show favoritism based on His own secret standard." This is like a judge declaring, "I am impartial and do not favor my friends... except when my friends are on trial, in which case I will acquit them regardless of the evidence." It creates a self-serving exception to a universal rule.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **confuses divine sovereignty with arbitrariness**. It operates on the premise that for God's choice to be truly sovereign, it must be utterly devoid of any condition or reason external to Himself, even a reason like foreseen faith. This leads to the picture of a God who chooses capriciously. The biblical view, however, is that God's sovereignty is always exercised in perfect harmony with His other attributes, including His justice, impartiality, and wisdom. His sovereign choice to save those who believe is not an arbitrary choice; it is a wise and just one, based on the perfect criteria He Himself established.

Question 4. How does the Bible define the "grace of God"? Is it a force that cannot be resisted, or is it an offer that can be accepted or rejected?

Answer 4. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The grace of God, as defined by the whole counsel of Scripture, is the unmerited, undeserved, and benevolent favor of God bestowed upon sinful humanity, supremely expressed in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It is the very heart of the gospel. Grace is not, however, a metaphysical, irresistible force that bypasses human volition. It is a **divine, enabling offer** that can be, and often is, resisted. The Bible is replete with evidence for this. Stephen, filled with the Holy Ghost, looked the Sanhedrin in the eye and declared, "Ye do always **resist the Holy Ghost**: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). This is not the language of impossibility. Paul pleads with the Corinthian church, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye **receive not the grace of God in vain**" (2 Corinthians 6:1). How can one receive grace "in vain" if it is an irresistible force that always accomplishes its purpose? The very existence of such warnings proves that a response is required. Grace is the power of God that opens blind eyes, unstops deaf ears, and draws the sinner to Christ, making salvation possible for a will that was formerly in bondage. But it does not turn men into puppets; it turns rebels into willing responders.

Scripture References: Psalm 45:2, Psalm 84:11, Proverbs 3:34, Zechariah 4:7, Zechariah 12:10, Luke 2:40, Luke 4:22, John 1:14, John 1:16-17, Acts 4:33, Acts 7:51, Acts 11:23, Acts 15:11, Acts 18:27, Acts 20:24, Acts 20:32, Romans 3:8, Romans 3:24, Romans 4:4, Romans 4:16, Romans 5:15, Romans 5:17, Romans 5:20-21, Romans 6:1, Romans 6:14-15, Romans 11:5-6, 1 Corinthians 1:4, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Galatians 2:21, Galatians 5:4, Ephesians 2:5, Ephesians 2:7-8, Titus 2:11, Hebrews 10:29, Hebrews 12:15, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:10, Jude 1:4

Anticipated Rebuttals: Proponents of irresistible grace will point to verses like John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," arguing that this implies an infallible, irresistible drawing. However, this verse describes a divine certainty, not a mechanical process. It speaks from God's eternal perspective, knowing who will ultimately respond. It doesn't negate the human process of coming. They will also cite Lydia's conversion in Acts 16:14, where "the Lord opened her heart, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." They claim this is a clear case of irresistible, regenerating grace. But this is an argument from silence. The text simply says the Lord opened her heart; it does not say He did so irresistibly or that she was entirely passive. Every conversion involves the Lord opening the heart. The question is whether that divine action is coercive or persuasive. The weight of Scripture, especially the direct warnings against resisting grace, points to the latter.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of Irresistible Grace (or Effectual Calling) is the 'I' in the TULIP acronym, central to **Calvinistic** theology. It is a hallmark of **Reformed and Presbyterian** denominations. This doctrine was systematically formulated by **Augustine of Hippo** (c. 412 AD and after) in his writings against the Pelagians. Augustine argued that due to original sin, the human will is not only damaged but is in complete bondage, unable to choose God unless it is first regenerated by an irresistible act of divine grace. This view was then championed by **John Calvin** in the 16th century and became a defining point of the Reformed faith, distinguishing it from Lutheran, Anabaptist, and later Arminian views on the nature of grace and free will.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 6:37, John 6:44-45, Acts 16:14, Romans 8:30, Philippians 2:13

Verses of Correction: Acts 7:51, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Matthew 23:37, Hebrews 4:2, Proverbs 1:24-26, Isaiah 65:2

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for irresistible grace often employs the **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The argument goes like this: "No true recipient of God's grace can resist it." When presented with a biblical example of someone resisting the Holy Spirit (like the Pharisees), the response is, "Well, they weren't *true* recipients of saving grace; they only received common grace." This fallacy protects the original claim by retroactively changing the definition. It's like saying, "No Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge." When shown a Scotsman who does, the retort is, "Ah, but no *true* Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge." It's a way to make a belief unfalsifiable by special pleading.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that views grace as a **metaphysical substance or force rather than a relational disposition**. This is a subtle but critical philosophical error. It reifies grace, turning it from God's personal, persuasive favor into an impersonal, mechanical energy that operates on the soul. This framework is more at home in Greek philosophy, with its abstract forms and forces, than in the relational narrative of the Hebrew Bible. The Bible speaks of God's grace, His lovingkindness, His mercy—personal attributes of a relational being. It does not speak of grace as a quantifiable, irresistible substance that can be infused into a passive object.

Question 5. What is the biblical definition of "mercy," and to whom is it extended?

Answer 5. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The biblical definition of mercy is God's tender-hearted compassion, which leads Him to withhold the just punishment that sin deserves. It is the flip side of grace; while grace gives us a gift we have not earned (salvation), mercy spares us from a penalty we have earned (damnation). The Bible describes God's mercy as rich, great, plenteous, and everlasting. A key aspect of His mercy is its universal availability. Psalm 145:9 declares, "The LORD is good to all: and his **tender mercies are over all his works**." This establishes that God's merciful disposition is not a selective attribute reserved for a few. However, the *application* of His saving mercy is conditional. It is extended to those who fear Him, to those who trust in Him, and most pointedly, to those who repent and turn from their sin. When God says in Romans 9, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," He is not declaring an arbitrary, capricious selection. He is asserting His sovereign right to set the terms for mercy. And what are those terms? He has chosen to extend His saving mercy to all, both Jew and Gentile, who come to Him through faith in the atoning work of His Son, Jesus Christ. His mercy is not a lottery; it is a fountain available to all who are thirsty.

Scripture References: Exodus 34:6-7, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 32:1, Psalm 51:1, Psalm 86:5, Psalm 86:15-16, Psalm 103:2-4, Psalm 103:7-8, Psalm 130:3, Psalm 145:9, Isaiah 55:7, Daniel 9:9, Jonah 4:2, Micah 7:18-19, Luke 1:77, Romans 9:15, Romans 9:18, Ephesians 2:4, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:3

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** will be an appeal to Romans 9:18: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." This is presented as the definitive proof that God's mercy is selective and unconditional. This argument, however, rips the

verse from its context. Paul is explaining why God was justified in setting aside the majority of national Israel (who were seeking righteousness by works) and extending His mercy to the Gentiles (who were responding by faith). The point is not about God's eternal decree for individuals, but His sovereign right to administer His redemptive plan in history. He is sovereign over the *terms* of mercy. The "whom he will" is not arbitrary; the "will" of God, as revealed throughout Scripture, is to have mercy on the repentant and believing heart, regardless of their ethnicity or background. The verse is a defense of God's right to include the Gentiles, not a declaration of His right to exclude individuals without cause.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This view of mercy as a selective, irresistible gift only for the elect is central to **high-Calvinist** theology, found in denominations like the **Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)**, the **Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)**, and **many Reformed Baptist churches**. The doctrine's architect is **Augustine of Hippo** (post-412 AD), who, in his arguments against Pelagius, concluded that since all humanity is a "mass of perdition," God is under no obligation to show mercy to anyone. Therefore, His choice to show mercy to some (the elect) is an act of pure, unconditional, and selective grace, while justly leaving the rest in their sin. This Augustinian formulation was adopted and powerfully articulated by **John Calvin** in the 16th century, becoming a bedrock of Reformed theology.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:15-18, Romans 11:32, Exodus 33:19

Verses of Correction: Psalm 145:9, Ezekiel 33:11, Titus 3:5, Luke 6:36, James 2:13, Micah 7:18, Lamentations 3:22-23

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for selective mercy commits the **Fallacy of Composition**. This fallacy occurs when one assumes that what is true of a part is true for the whole. The argument takes one part of God's character—His sovereignty—and makes it the defining attribute for the whole, forcing all His other attributes, like His universal goodness and mercy, to be reinterpreted through that single lens. It's like looking at the engine of a car and concluding the entire purpose of the car is to burn fuel, ignoring the steering wheel, the seats, and the brakes. The Bible presents a composite picture of God, whose sovereignty, justice, and mercy work in perfect, harmonious unity, not in opposition to one another.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views mercy as a finite commodity rather than an infinite attribute**. This philosophical error treats God's mercy as if it were a limited resource that must be carefully rationed out. If He gives it to one person, there is less for another. The Bible, however, portrays God's mercy as an overflowing, inexhaustible fountain. His mercy is "new every morning." The decision to extend saving mercy to one person does not diminish His ability or willingness to extend it to another. The limitation is not on God's supply of mercy, but on man's willingness to receive it.

Question 6. According to Genesis 3 and Romans 5, what were the immediate and long-term consequences of Adam's sin for humanity?

Answer 6. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): Adam's sin, as detailed in Genesis 3 and theologically explained in Romans 5, was a cataclysmic event that fractured creation and plunged humanity into a state of sin and death. The immediate consequences were spiritual alienation from God, the introduction of shame and fear, and a curse upon both humanity and the ground itself. The long-term consequences are universal and profound. Romans 5:12 states, "by one man sin entered into the world, and **death by sin**; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This means every human being now inherits a fallen nature—a predisposition toward sin—and is subject to physical death. However, it is critical to understand what is and is not inherited. We inherit a sinful nature and the consequence of death, but we **do not inherit the guilt of Adam's specific act**. The Bible is clear on individual accountability. Ezekiel 18:20 states, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." We are condemned for our own sins, which spring from our inherited fallen nature, not for Adam's original transgression. The idea that we are born guilty and already damned because of Adam is a misreading of the text.

Scripture References: Genesis 3:1-24, Genesis 6:5, Isaiah 53:6, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:9-18, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:12-21, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, Ephesians 2:1-3, Hebrews 9:27

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** will focus on Romans 5:18-19, which says, "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" and "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." This is presented as proof that all are born legally guilty and condemned for Adam's sin. This interpretation, however, fails to see the parallel structure of the passage. Paul is contrasting the work of Adam with the work of Christ. Just as Adam's act brought the *consequence* of condemnation and a sinful state to all, so Christ's act brings the *offer* of justification and life to all. The provision of righteousness is available to all, but it must be received by faith. Similarly, the condemnation from Adam is a universal state into which we are born, but our final judgment is based on our own response to that state. Being "made sinners" refers to our constitution, our nature, not to a legal imputation of Adam's specific guilt.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of "Original Sin," specifically the idea of inherited guilt (as opposed to just a fallen nature), is a cornerstone of **Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. This doctrine was most forcefully and systematically developed by **Augustine of Hippo** around **412 AD**. He taught that all of humanity was "seminally present" in Adam and thus participated in his sin, inheriting both his corrupted nature and his guilt. This Augustinian view became the dominant position in Western Christianity. It stands in contrast to the Eastern Orthodox view and the earlier views of many church fathers, who taught an inherited corruption and mortality but not an inherited guilt.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 5:12, Romans 5:18-19, Psalm 51:5, Ephesians 2:3

Verses of Correction: Ezekiel 18:20, Deuteronomy 24:16, Jeremiah 31:29-30, Romans 7:9

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for inherited guilt often relies on the **Fallacy of Equivocation**. This fallacy occurs when a key term is used with two or more different meanings in the same argument. The word "death" in Romans 5 is used to mean both the consequence of sin (physical and spiritual separation) and, by interpretation, a state of "total inability." The phrase

"made sinners" is equivocated to mean both "constituted with a sinful nature" and "made legally guilty of Adam's act." By subtly shifting the meaning of these key terms, the argument builds a conclusion that is not supported by a consistent reading of the text. It's like arguing, "The sign said 'Fine for parking here,' and since it was fine, I parked there." The word "fine" is used with two different meanings.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption based on a **legalistic, forensic model of federal headship that overshadows the biological and relational aspects**. This view treats Adam primarily as a legal representative whose single demerit is automatically imputed to everyone's account, like a class-action lawsuit where everyone is found liable because of the actions of one representative. While there is a representative aspect, the Bible's emphasis is more organic. We are "in Adam" in the sense that we derive our fallen nature from him, just as a tree's branches share the nature of the root. We are not so much legally charged with his crime as we are born with his hereditary disease.

Question 7. Does the Bible teach that humans are born "totally depraved" and incapable of seeking God, or do they possess a conscience and a knowledge of good and evil?

Answer 7. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Bible teaches that humanity is born with a profoundly corrupt and sinful nature, but it does not teach "Total Depravity" in the sense that humans are incapable of any spiritual response to God. This latter idea is a philosophical extension, not a direct biblical statement. The Scripture is clear about our fallen state: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." However, the Bible also affirms that humans retain two critical faculties. First, as a result of the fall in Genesis 3, man possesses a **knowledge of good and evil**. Second, Romans 2 describes an innate **conscience**, which acts as an internal witness to God's moral law, either "accusing or else excusing" a person's actions. It is this God-given moral awareness that the Holy Spirit uses to convict the world of sin. If man were truly like a stone or a corpse, utterly incapable of perceiving or responding to spiritual truth, then God's universal commands to "seek the LORD," "choose life," and "repent" would be a cruel and meaningless charade. The biblical position is that man is spiritually dead in his legal standing before God and cannot save himself, but he is not a moral automaton. He retains the capacity to respond when God's grace initiates and draws him.

Scripture References: Genesis 3:22, Genesis 42:21, 2 Samuel 24:10, Job 27:6, Proverbs 20:27, Matthew 27:3, Acts 2:37, Acts 24:16, Romans 2:14-15, Romans 7:18, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 2 Corinthians 4:2, Titus 1:15

Anticipated Rebuttals: Proponents of Total Depravity will cite verses like Romans 3:11, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God," and 1 Corinthians 2:14, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." These verses, they argue, prove total inability. However, this interpretation takes the verses to an extreme that their context does not support. Romans 3 is a declaration of universal *guilt*, not universal *inability*. It describes what man does in his fallen state when left to himself, not what he is incapable of doing when confronted by the grace of God. 1 Corinthians 2:14 describes the "natural man" without the aid of the Holy Spirit. It does not negate

the fact that the Spirit can and does illuminate the minds of the unregenerate to understand the gospel. These verses describe the problem to which God's drawing grace is the solution.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of Total Depravity (or Total Inability) is the 'T' in the TULIP acronym and is a foundational doctrine of **Calvinism**. It is taught in **Reformed, Presbyterian, and some hyper-Calvinistic Baptist churches**. While the seeds of this idea are in **Augustine's** (c. 412 AD) writings on original sin, it was **John Calvin** (1536) and his successors who developed it into a systematic doctrine of man's absolute inability to contribute anything to his salvation, including the act of faith, unless he is first irresistibly regenerated. This stands in contrast to the Arminian view of "prevenient grace," which holds that God's grace restores to all people the ability to respond to the gospel.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 3:10-12, 1 Corinthians 2:14, John 6:44, John 6:65, Jeremiah 17:9, Ephesians 2:1-3

Verses of Correction: Romans 2:14-15, Acts 10:1-4, Acts 17:27, John 1:9, Matthew 7:7-8, Revelation 3:20

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for Total Depravity often commits the **Fallacy of the Single Cause** (also known as oversimplification). It takes the complex problem of human sinfulness and reduces it to a single cause: a supposed metaphysical inability to respond. It ignores other contributing factors acknowledged in Scripture, such as a rebellious will, a love for darkness, spiritual blindness caused by Satan, and the deceitfulness of sin. The Bible presents a multifaceted diagnosis of the human condition. By reducing it to the single, simple cause of "inability," the doctrine creates a neat philosophical system but fails to capture the full, complex reality described in the Bible. It's like a doctor diagnosing every illness as simply "a lack of health" without investigating the specific virus or injury.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **confuses a moral inclination with a metaphysical incapacity**. This is a category error. The Bible describes humanity's problem in moral terms: we are rebellious, we love darkness, our hearts are deceitful. We are unwilling. The doctrine of Total Inability translates this moral unwillingness into a metaphysical, constitutional *inability*, as if a component of the human soul required for response is missing or broken beyond repair. This shifts the problem from the realm of personal responsibility and rebellion to the realm of constitutional defect, which ultimately traces back to the Creator's design.

Question 8. How does the story of Cornelius in Acts 10 challenge the idea that an unregenerate person cannot perform acts that are pleasing to God?

Answer 8. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The story of Cornelius the centurion in Acts 10 serves as a direct and powerful biblical refutation of the rigid doctrine that an unregenerate person is incapable of performing any act that is pleasing to God. Before Cornelius had ever heard the gospel of Jesus Christ from the Apostle Peter, he is described in the most positive terms. He was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." The critical point is God's response to these actions. An angel

appears to Cornelius and says, "Thy prayers and thine alms are **come up for a memorial before God.**" This is an explicit statement of divine approval. God saw, remembered, and approved of the sincere, God-fearing actions of this unsaved Gentile. While these acts of piety did not and could not save him—he still needed to hear the "words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved"—they demonstrate that the heart of an unregenerate person can be oriented toward God and produce actions that He recognizes as good. This account shatters the framework of Total Inability, which insists that every act of the unsaved is nothing but "filthy rags." Cornelius proves that a person can seek God, and that God, in His grace, responds to that seeking by providing the very gospel that leads to salvation.

Scripture References: Acts 10:1-48, Acts 11:13-14, Romans 2:14-15, Matthew 7:7-8, Acts 17:27

Anticipated Rebuttals: The common **rebuttal** is to claim that Cornelius must have been a "regenerate Old Testament saint" or that his good works were the result of a special, irresistible grace that had already regenerated him, even though he hadn't heard the gospel. This is an argument from silence and an act of special pleading, designed to protect the theological system. The text gives no indication that Cornelius was already saved; in fact, the angel explicitly tells him that Peter will give him the words "whereby thou... shalt be saved," indicating his salvation was a future event, contingent on hearing and believing the gospel. To argue he was already regenerate is to contradict the plain narrative. Another **rebuttal** is to dismiss his works as having no ultimate value. While it's true they didn't earn his salvation, to say God was not pleased by them is to contradict the angel's statement that they came up as a "memorial before God." God was pleased with his sincere heart, which is why He graciously sent him the means of salvation.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The idea that the unregenerate are incapable of any good is a core component of **high-Calvinist** soteriology, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This stems from the doctrine of Total Depravity, which asserts that the depravity of man is so extensive that it renders him unable to do anything to please God. This doctrine was formalized by **John Calvin** in the 16th century, building on the later work of **Augustine**. They argued that without prior regeneration, any seemingly good work is still rooted in a sinful nature and is therefore sinful in God's sight. The story of Cornelius presents a significant challenge to this rigid formulation, which is why systematic theologians must resort to explaining it away with unstated assumptions.

Verses of Apparent Support: Isaiah 64:6, Romans 14:23, Hebrews 11:6, Romans 8:8

Verses of Correction: Acts 10:4, Acts 10:31, Acts 10:34-35, Romans 2:6-7, Romans 2:10, Mark 12:33-34

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that Cornelius's good works were not actually good in God's sight employs the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy. Initially, the standard is that the unregenerate can do no good. When presented with the clear example of Cornelius, whose prayers and alms were a "memorial before God," the goalpost is moved. The new argument becomes, "Well, they weren't *savingly* good," or "He must have already been regenerate." This fallacy changes the criteria for the argument mid-stream in order to dismiss inconvenient evidence. It's like claiming a basketball player can't score, and when he scores a basket, you say, "Well, that wasn't a *championship-winning* basket."

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that operates on a **strictly binary, all-or-nothing view of human morality**. This philosophical position fails to recognize nuance. In this framework, an action is either perfectly holy (and thus only possible for the regenerate) or utterly sinful. It does not allow for the biblical category of a sincere, God-fearing, yet unsaved person whose actions, while not meriting salvation, are still recognized by God as righteous in their own context. The Bible presents a more complex picture, acknowledging "civil righteousness" and the reality of a conscience that can lead even an unbeliever to do things that are objectively good and in accordance with God's law.

Question 9. What is the purpose of the law of Moses, according to Paul in Galatians and Romans?

Answer 9. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): According to the Apostle Paul's meticulous arguments in Galatians and Romans, the Law of Moses was never intended by God to be a means of justification or salvation. Its primary purpose was to function as a divine diagnostic tool. The Law is a perfect mirror that reveals the true nature of sin and the utter sinfulness of humanity. Paul states that "by the law is the **knowledge of sin**" (Romans 3:20). It was given to stop every mouth and prove the whole world guilty before God. A second, related purpose was to serve as a temporary guardian or "schoolmaster" to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). By showing us our inability to achieve righteousness on our own and by revealing the just condemnation we are under, the Law was designed to make us despair of our own efforts and flee to Christ for the grace and mercy we desperately need. It was added "because of transgressions, **till the seed should come** to whom the promise was made," that seed being Christ. Now that faith in Christ has come, we are no longer under that schoolmaster. The Law, therefore, diagnoses the disease of sin with perfect accuracy but provides no cure; the cure is found only in the gospel of grace.

Scripture References: Romans 3:19-20, Romans 3:27-28, Romans 4:15, Romans 5:20, Romans 7:7-13, Romans 10:4, Galatians 2:16, Galatians 2:19, Galatians 3:10-13, Galatians 3:19-25, 1 Timothy 1:8-9

Anticipated Rebuttals: A common **rebuttal** is to argue that while we are not saved by the works of the law, the moral aspects of the law, particularly the Ten Commandments, are still a binding rule of life for the Christian. This view, often called the "third use of the law," suggests it serves as a guide for sanctification. While it is true that nine of the Ten Commandments are reaffirmed in the New Testament, they are not binding on the Christian *because* they are part of the Mosaic Law. They are binding because they are the commandments of Christ. Paul is clear that the Christian is "not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14) and is "dead to the law" (Romans 7:4). To place a believer back under the Law of Moses, even just its "moral" part, is to misunderstand its purpose and to risk falling from grace, as Paul warns the Galatians. The Christian's rule of life is the law of Christ, which is fulfilled by love.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The idea of dividing the Law into "ceremonial, civil, and moral" categories, and then claiming the moral law (the Ten Commandments) is still binding on Christians, is a hallmark of **Reformed and Presbyterian** theology. This framework was systematically developed by **John Calvin** in his *Institutes* (1536) as a way to maintain the authority

of the Ten Commandments within a grace-based system. This formulation, however, is a theological construct not explicitly found in Scripture. Paul consistently speaks of "the law" as a unified whole, which has been fulfilled in Christ. Other groups, like **Seventh-day Adventists**, take this further by insisting on the binding nature of the fourth commandment, the Sabbath, which creates even greater tension with Paul's teachings on the New Covenant.

Verses of Apparent Support: Matthew 5:17-18, Romans 3:31, Romans 7:12, 1 Timothy 1:8, James 2:10-11

Verses of Correction: Romans 6:14, Romans 7:4-6, Romans 10:4, Galatians 3:24-25, Galatians 5:18, 2 Corinthians 3:6-11, Hebrews 8:13

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for the "third use of the law" often commits the **Fallacy of Division**. This fallacy occurs when one assumes that what is true of the whole must also be true of its parts. The argument assumes that because the *principles* of morality found in the Ten Commandments are timeless, the *covenantal code* of the Ten Commandments itself must also be timelessly binding. It fails to recognize that the code itself was part of a specific covenant (the Mosaic Covenant) that has been superseded. It's like arguing that because the principles of good sportsmanship in the 1920 rulebook for baseball are still valid, that entire 1920 rulebook is still in effect for today's games, ignoring the new, updated rulebook.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **fails to properly distinguish between a positive law and a natural law**. A positive law is a specific code given to a specific people at a specific time (e.g., the Law of Moses). A natural law is a universal moral principle written on the human heart (as described in Romans 2). The Ten Commandments are the codification of natural law principles within the specific positive law of the Old Covenant. The error is to confuse the temporary code with the eternal principles. The code is abolished, but the principles of love for God and neighbor, which it reflected, endure and are fulfilled in the higher "law of Christ."

Question 10. If the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), does this refer to spiritual inability or to condemnation and physical death?

Answer 10. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The solemn declaration that "the wages of sin is death" in Romans 6:23 refers directly and powerfully to **condemnation and the resulting separation from God**, which manifests as both physical and spiritual death. It is a legal and relational term, not a metaphysical one. "Wages" is a term of commerce; it is what one has earned through their work. The work of sin earns the just payment of death. This death has three aspects in Scripture: spiritual death (present alienation from the life of God, as described in Ephesians 2:1), physical death (the separation of the soul and spirit from the body), and the "second death" (the ultimate, eternal punishment in the lake of fire, as described in Revelation 20:14). To interpret "death" in this context as "spiritual inability" is to import a philosophical concept into a straightforward biblical statement. The Bible's narrative is not about a constitutional incapacity, but about a legal and moral reality: sin leads to just condemnation. A prisoner on death row is legally "dead" and separated from society, but he is not incapable of hearing and responding to a

pardon. Likewise, the sinner is condemned, but is not incapable of hearing and responding to the gospel of grace.

Scripture References: Genesis 2:17, Ezekiel 18:4, Ezekiel 18:20, Romans 5:12, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:1, Colossians 2:13, James 1:15, Revelation 20:14, Revelation 21:8

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to link the "death" of Romans 6:23 with the state of being "dead in trespasses and sins" from Ephesians 2:1. The argument is that a "dead" man cannot do anything, therefore this death must mean total inability to respond. This **rebuttal** rests on taking a metaphor too literally and creating a false equivalence. The "death" in Ephesians 2 is a metaphor for spiritual alienation and condemnation, not for a lack of consciousness or volition. The very people described as "dead" in verse 1 are described as "walking" according to the course of this world in verse 2. Dead men do not walk. Paul is using a powerful metaphor to describe their spiritual state of separation from God, not to make a clinical statement about their metaphysical capacities. The wages of sin is a just sentence, not a constitutional paralysis.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of "death" as "total inability" is a foundational assumption of **Calvinistic** theology, necessary to support the doctrine of Total Depravity. This view is taught in **Reformed, Presbyterian, and hyper-Calvinistic** circles. The theological framework was constructed by **Augustine** (c. 412 AD) and systematized by **John Calvin** (1536). They argued that the "death" passed down from Adam was so absolute that it destroyed the faculty of the will to choose spiritual good, thus making irresistible grace a logical necessity for salvation. This interpretation is a philosophical inference, not an exegetical conclusion drawn from the text itself. It redefines a legal term ("wages," "death") to fit a metaphysical presupposition.

Verses of Apparent Support: Ephesians 2:1-5, Colossians 2:13, John 5:24

Verses of Correction: Romans 6:23, James 1:15, Genesis 2:17, Luke 15:24, Luke 15:32, 1 Timothy 5:6

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that "death" means "inability" commits the **Fallacy of False Analogy** (specifically, taking a metaphor too literally). It takes the metaphor of being "dead in sin" and treats it as a literal, one-to-one correspondence with physical death. A physically dead person cannot respond, therefore, the argument goes, a spiritually dead person cannot respond. But metaphors are not meant to be pressed into service with this kind of wooden literalism. As shown in Ephesians 2, the "dead" are still "walking," "fulfilling desires," and "having their conversation." The analogy is meant to convey the gravity of their separation from God, not to define their metaphysical capacities. It's a flawed comparison that ignores the limits of the metaphor.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **privileges a metaphysical definition over a legal one**. It takes the biblical concept of "death," which is primarily presented as a legal penalty and a relational separation, and reinterprets it through the lens of metaphysics, turning it into a statement about the essential nature or constitution of the human soul. This shift from the legal to the metaphysical is a classic philosophical move that abstracts the text from its narrative and covenantal context. It

asks "What is the *nature* of this death?" instead of "What is the *meaning* of this death in the story of God's judgment and redemption?"

The Gospel and the Atonement

Question 11. According to 1 Corinthians 15, what are the essential components of the Gospel message that Paul preached?

Answer 11. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15, lays down the architectural blueprint of the Gospel with absolute precision, declaring it to be the very foundation upon which the church stands. This is not a message he invented, but one he "received" and "delivered." The essential, non-negotiable components are a set of three historical, verifiable facts, each validated by the Old Testament scriptures. First, "**Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.**" This is the bedrock: His death was not a martyr's tragedy but a purposeful, substitutionary atonement, foretold by the prophets. It was a death *for us*. Second, "**he was buried.**" This is the crucial, often-neglected proof that His death was real. A phantom does not need a tomb. The burial confirms the finality of His sacrifice, setting the stage for the miracle to follow. Third, and most gloriously, "**he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.**" This is the vindication of His person and the victory over sin and death. It is the receipt for the payment He made on the cross. Paul is emphatic that these three pillars—the atoning death, the verifying burial, and the victorious resurrection—are the gospel "by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you." Any message that alters, adds to, or subtracts from this core is, by definition, not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Scripture References: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, Romans 1:1-4, Luke 24:44-47, Acts 2:22-36, Acts 10:38-43, Acts 13:26-39

Anticipated Rebuttals: One common **rebuttal** is to add human response as an essential component *of the gospel itself*. For example, some would say the gospel is "Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and our repentance and faith." While repentance and faith are the necessary *response* to the gospel, Paul defines the gospel as the objective facts about Christ's work. The gospel is the good news of what *He* has done; faith is how we receive it. Conflating the two confuses the message with the response. Another **rebuttal** comes from groups that add their own unique doctrines to the gospel. For instance, some might say the gospel includes adherence to a specific day of worship or the teachings of a modern prophet. Paul preemptively refutes this in Galatians 1:8, stating that if anyone, even an angel from heaven, preaches any other gospel, "let him be accursed." The gospel is a closed set of historical facts, not an open-ended theological system.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: While most Christian denominations would affirm these core facts, the error often comes in addition or subtraction. **Roman Catholicism**, for example, while affirming the creed, adds the necessity of sacraments administered by the church as instrumental for salvation, thus creating "another gospel" of faith plus works. Some groups, like **Seventh-day Adventists**, add their own distinctive doctrines (like the Investigative Judgment and the Sabbath) as central to the "everlasting gospel," which shifts the focus from the finished work of Christ on the cross. The historical tendency to add to the simple, powerful gospel of 1 Corinthians 15 is a

recurring error that Paul vehemently opposed in his own day, particularly with the Judaizers who sought to add the works of the law to the gospel of grace.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For adding works) James 2:24, Matthew 19:17; (For adding Sabbath) Exodus 20:8-11, Mark 2:27-28

Verses of Correction: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Galatians 1:6-9, Romans 1:16, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:8-9

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The error of adding to the gospel often involves the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy (also known as raising the bar). The Bible sets the goalpost for the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15. When a group adds another requirement, like a specific work or a dietary law, they are moving the goalpost. The argument becomes, "Yes, you must believe in Christ's death and resurrection... *and* you must also do X." This fallacy illegitimately alters the original terms of the debate. It's like agreeing to a race of 100 meters, and then as you approach the finish line, the official says, "Actually, you also have to climb this wall to win." The original, simple terms have been changed.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views salvation as a cooperative project rather than a finished accomplishment**. This philosophical error stems from human pride and the innate desire to contribute to one's own rescue. It reframes the gospel from being a declaration of what God has *done* for us in Christ, to being an instruction manual for what we must *do* for God. This shifts the entire framework from one of grace and reception to one of effort and merit. It is the difference between being rescued from a raging river by a helicopter (a finished work you simply accept) and being thrown a rope and told to help pull yourself to shore (a cooperative project).

Question 12. How do the "whosoever" passages in the Bible (e.g., John 3:16, Romans 10:13) inform our understanding of the scope of the Gospel invitation?

Answer 12. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The "whosoever" passages are the Bible's great, resounding declaration that the gospel invitation is **universal, unrestricted, and available to every single person**. When John 3:16 proclaims that God gave His Son that "**whosoever** believeth in him should not perish," and Romans 10:13 thunders, "**whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," these are not ambiguous statements. They are divine guarantees that demolish any man-made theological wall built to limit the scope of God's grace. The word "whosoever" is a universal solvent that dissolves the categories of a limited atonement. It means what it says. It does not mean "whosoever of the elect." It does not mean "whosoever is irresistibly drawn." It means any person, from any nation, in any condition, who hears the call and responds in faith, will be saved. These verses reveal the sincere, bona fide nature of the gospel offer. God is not playing a cruel game, inviting all to a feast prepared only for a few. The invitation is universal because the provision—the atoning death of Christ—is sufficient for all. The gate is open to all who will enter.

Scripture References: John 3:15-16, John 4:14, John 11:26, John 12:46, Acts 2:21, Acts 10:43, Romans 9:33, Romans 10:11, Romans 10:13, 1 John 4:15, Revelation 22:17

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to claim that "whosoever" must be interpreted in light of other verses that speak of election. The argument is that "whosoever" only refers to the elect who are scattered among all the nations. So, it means "whosoever *of the elect* believes." This, however, is a classic case of eisegesis—reading a preconceived system into the text. The word "whosoever" in both Greek and English is inherently universal and requires no such qualification. To limit its meaning is to do violence to the plain sense of the language. Another **rebuttal** is that while the *call* is universal, the *ability* to respond is limited to the elect. But this again creates an insincere offer. What good is an invitation to a feast for a man who is bound and gagged and cannot possibly attend? The "whosoever" passages presuppose not only a universal offer but also a sufficient grace that enables a response from anyone who hears.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The effort to limit the plain meaning of "whosoever" is a necessary tactic for theological systems built on the doctrine of Limited Atonement, the 'L' in the TULIP of **Calvinism**. This view is taught in **Reformed, Presbyterian, and some Sovereign Grace Baptist churches**. The theological necessity to reinterpret these universal passages stems directly from the system created by **John Calvin** (1536), which followed the deterministic logic of **Augustine**. If God has only elected some to salvation, then Christ could only have died for those same people, and therefore any universal-sounding offer in the Bible must be reinterpreted to fit the logic of the system. This stands in contrast to the plain reading of the text embraced by Arminians, Wesleyans, and most Anabaptists.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 6:37, John 17:9, Acts 13:48, Ephesians 1:4

Verses of Correction: John 3:16, Romans 10:13, Revelation 22:17, 1 Timothy 2:4-6, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The reinterpretation of "whosoever" to mean "whosoever of the elect" is a clear example of the **Begging the Question** fallacy (also known as circular reasoning). The argument's premise assumes the very conclusion it is trying to prove. The reasoning is: "The Bible teaches that only the elect can be saved. This verse says 'whosoever' can be saved. Therefore, 'whosoever' must mean 'whosoever of the elect'." The conclusion (only the elect can be saved) is used to define the terms of the evidence, rather than letting the evidence define the conclusion. It's like saying, "My friend is always honest. My friend told me he is a unicorn. Therefore, he must be a unicorn, because my friend is always honest."

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **prioritizes logical consistency within a closed system over the plain meaning of the biblical text**. This is a philosophical error where the man-made system becomes the grid through which the Bible is read. If a verse doesn't fit the system, the verse must be reinterpreted, not the system questioned. This approach elevates human reason and systematic theology above divine revelation. It presumes that God's thoughts must conform to our logical syllogisms. The Bible, however, often presents truths in tension or paradox, and our responsibility is to believe what it says, even if it doesn't fit neatly into our philosophical boxes.

Question 13. What is the meaning of Christ's death being a "propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2)?

Answer 13. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The declaration in 1 John 2:2 is one of the most explicit and powerful statements in all of Scripture regarding the unlimited sufficiency of Christ's atonement. A "propitiation" is a sacrifice that satisfies the wrath of God against sin. John, writing to believers, first assures them that Jesus is the propitiation for "our sins." But then, as if to preempt any possible misunderstanding, he immediately adds the clarifying clause: "**and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.**" The structure of this sentence is designed to be universally inclusive. It erects an impenetrable wall against any doctrine of a limited or particular atonement. The sacrifice of Christ was of such infinite value that it is sufficient to cover the sins of every person who has ever lived. While the *application* of this atonement is limited to those who believe, the *provision* of the atonement is for the "whole world." God has provided a remedy sufficient to heal every sinner; the tragedy is that many refuse to take it. This verse, standing in its plain, grammatical sense, is a death blow to the idea that Christ only died for a select few.

Scripture References: 1 John 2:2, John 1:29, John 3:16-17, John 4:42, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 2 Corinthians 5:19, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, 1 Timothy 4:10, Titus 2:11, Hebrews 2:9

Anticipated Rebuttals: Adherents of limited atonement have developed several **rebuttals** to neutralize this verse. One is to argue that "the whole world" does not mean every single person, but rather "the elect from all over the world," both Jew and Gentile. This interpretation, however, is forced and unnatural. When the Bible wants to say "the elect," it has words for it. Here, it uses the most universal term possible. Another **rebuttal** is to distinguish between the "sufficiency" and "efficiency" of the atonement, arguing it was sufficient for all but only efficient for the elect. But this is precisely what the non-Calvinist position is! The verse itself is teaching unlimited sufficiency. The most common **rebuttal** is to claim that if Christ died for everyone and not everyone is saved, then God's purpose failed and Christ's blood was wasted on the non-elect. This argument misunderstands the nature of the atonement. It was a legal provision made available to all, conditional upon faith. A pardon offered to a prisoner is not "wasted" if the prisoner refuses to accept it; the failure lies with the recipient, not the provider.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of Limited Atonement (or Particular Redemption) is the 'L' in the TULIP acronym and a central, though often controversial, tenet of **Calvinism**. It is taught in most **Reformed and Presbyterian** denominations. The doctrine follows logically from the premise of Unconditional Election: if God has only chosen to save the elect, then it would be illogical for Christ to die for the non-elect. This systematic logic was developed by **John Calvin** (1536) and his followers, particularly **Theodore Beza**, and was formally enshrined as dogma at the **Synod of Dort** (1618-1619). This view is a point of significant contention, even among those who hold to other aspects of Calvinism, as it directly confronts so many universal-sounding passages in Scripture.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 10:11, John 10:15, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25, Matthew 1:21

Verses of Correction: 1 John 2:2, Hebrews 2:9, 1 Timothy 2:6, 1 Timothy 4:10, 2 Corinthians 5:15, John 3:16

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that a universal atonement means Christ's blood was "wasted" on the non-elect commits the **Straw Man** fallacy. It misrepresents the opposing position to make it easier to attack. The non-Calvinist position is not that Christ's death automatically saves everyone. The position is that Christ's death made a sufficient legal provision for the salvation of everyone, a provision that is applied upon the condition of faith. The "wasted blood" argument attacks a position that no one actually holds (universalism) in order to avoid dealing with the actual position being argued (unlimited sufficiency). It's like arguing against a proposal to build a public library by saying, "You want to force everyone to read books they don't like," which misrepresents the proposal entirely.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the atonement through a commercial or quantitative lens**. This philosophical error treats the atonement like a precise financial transaction: Christ had a certain amount of "redemptive value" in His death, and it was paid out to purchase a specific number of people. If He paid for someone who is ultimately not saved, then part of the payment was lost or wasted. The Bible, however, presents the atonement in legal and relational terms. It was a sacrifice of infinite intrinsic value, sufficient to satisfy the demands of justice for all sin. It is a provision, a remedy, a pardon offered, not a commercial purchase of specific individuals.

Question 14. How does the command to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) align with the doctrine of a limited atonement?

Answer 14. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Great Commission to "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to **every creature**" is fundamentally and irreconcilably at odds with the doctrine of a limited atonement. The command is universal, absolute, and without qualification. It presupposes that the message being preached is a genuine possibility for every single person who hears it. If, however, Christ's atoning death was only intended for a select group of elect, then the gospel is not actually "good news" for every creature. For the vast majority of humanity (the non-elect), it is not good news at all; it is irrelevant news, a story of a salvation that was never made available to them. How can a missionary, with integrity, stand before a crowd and offer Christ freely to all, knowing that for most of them, Christ did not die? It turns the sincere, universal invitation of the gospel into a **divine charade**. The only way the command to preach to every creature aligns with the character of a truthful God is if the provision of salvation is as universal as the command to proclaim it. The atonement is sufficient for all, therefore the offer must be made to all.

Scripture References: Mark 16:15, Matthew 28:19, Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8, Romans 10:14-18, Colossians 1:23

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that we preach to everyone because we do not know who the elect are. We cast the net wide, and God will ensure that His elect who are in the net will be brought in. While this is true in practice (we don't know who is elect), it doesn't solve the underlying problem of sincerity. The issue is not our ignorance, but God's command. The command is to offer a free gift. If the gift doesn't exist for the person being offered, the offer itself is disingenuous, regardless of the proclaimer's knowledge. Another **rebuttal** is that the gospel call serves a secondary purpose for the non-elect: it increases their condemnation for rejecting a

salvation they couldn't have accepted anyway. This portrays a God who commands the preaching of the gospel not out of a desire to save, but out of a desire to heap more guilt upon the damned, a view that is monstrous and contrary to the God of all grace.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The tension between the Great Commission and Limited Atonement is a significant point of internal conflict within **Calvinism**. While **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches uphold both doctrines, they must engage in significant theological reasoning to reconcile them. This tension led to the development of **Amyraldianism** (or Four-Point Calvinism) by **Moyse Amyraut** in the 17th century. Amyraut sought to resolve the issue by proposing a "hypothetical universalism," where Christ's death was sufficient for all, but only applied to the elect. While this view was condemned by more staunch Calvinists at the time, it demonstrates the long-standing difficulty of harmonizing a universal command with a particular provision.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For God's hidden purposes) Romans 11:33, Deuteronomy 29:29; (For God's sovereignty in drawing) John 6:44

Verses of Correction: Mark 16:15, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, Ezekiel 18:23, Matthew 28:19

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that we preach to all because we don't know who the elect are commits the **Red Herring** fallacy. It diverts attention from the core issue, which is the sincerity of God's offer, to a different issue, which is our ignorance. The central problem is not about our knowledge, but about the nature of the offer itself. Is the gospel a bona fide offer for every person who hears it? The "we don't know who is elect" argument avoids answering this question directly by changing the subject. It's like being asked, "Is this medicine you're selling a real cure?" and responding, "I sell it to everyone because I don't know who is actually sick." The response doesn't address the medicine's efficacy.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **separates God's command from His character**. It treats the Great Commission as a bare, sovereign command that must be obeyed, without considering whether that command is consistent with the revealed character of God as truthful and loving. A truthful God would not command His servants to make a false offer. A loving God would not mock the non-elect with an unattainable salvation. The philosophical error is to view God's will as raw, unscrutable power, rather than as an expression of His perfectly integrated and holy nature. The Bible teaches that what God commands is always a reflection of who God is.

Question 15. If Christ's atonement was intended only for the elect, what is the purpose of the universal calls to repentance found throughout Scripture?

Answer 15. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The universal calls to repentance that permeate the Bible are rendered logically incoherent and morally problematic by the doctrine of a limited atonement. God's command at the Areopagus, that He "now commandeth **all men every where to repent**" (Acts 17:30), is a universal directive. Repentance, in the biblical sense, is a turning from sin *to God* for forgiveness. If Christ's atoning sacrifice—the only basis for that forgiveness—was not made for the non-elect, then to what are they turning? It would be a turning

to a God who has made no provision for their sin. It would be like a judge commanding every condemned prisoner to appeal for a pardon, while knowing that he has already decided to grant pardons to only a select few and has thrown away the paperwork for all the rest. The universal command to repent only makes sense if there is a **universal provision for forgiveness** available to all who obey that command. The call is universal because the atonement is sufficient for all. To believe otherwise is to portray God as commanding the impossible and then condemning men for failing to achieve it.

Scripture References: Acts 17:30, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 26:20, Mark 1:15, Luke 13:3, Luke 24:47, 2 Peter 3:9

Anticipated Rebuttals: The standard **rebuttal** is that the call to repent is part of man's general duty to God, regardless of the provision of salvation. All men are obligated to obey God, and their failure to repent (even if they are unable to) is simply another sin for which they are justly condemned. This argument, however, separates repentance from its gospel context. The biblical call to repent is almost always linked to the promise of forgiveness and the coming of the kingdom. It's not an abstract moral duty; it's an invitation to be reconciled to God through Christ. Another **rebuttal** is that the call hardens the non-elect and makes their condemnation more just. This, again, paints a monstrous picture of God, who commands repentance not out of a desire to save, but out of a desire to increase the guilt of the damned. This is contrary to the God who pleads, "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This tension is inherent within all **Calvinistic** systems (**Reformed, Presbyterian**, etc.) that hold to a limited atonement. The system's internal logic, which begins with God's sovereign decree of election, necessitates this view. This framework, originating with **Augustine** and formalized by **John Calvin** and the **Synod of Dort** (1618-1619), must find a way to account for the universal commands of Scripture. The solution is typically to posit two "wills" in God: His "decretive will" (which saves only the elect) and His "preceptive will" (which commands all to repent). While a theological distinction, it creates the appearance of a God who is working at cross-purposes with Himself, commanding what His decree has made impossible for the majority.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:19-21, Matthew 11:25-26

Verses of Correction: Acts 17:30, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9, Luke 13:3, 1 Timothy 2:4

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the call to repent serves only to increase the condemnation of the non-elect commits the **Appeal to Spite** fallacy. It attempts to justify a position by appealing to a sense of malice or ill-will, in this case attributing it to God. It suggests that God's motive for a universal command is not grace but the desire to heap more guilt on the damned. This is a character attack used to defend a logically weak position. It avoids the central problem—the sincerity of the offer—by proposing a morally repugnant alternative. It's like arguing that a "Wet Paint" sign is placed on a bench not to keep people from getting dirty, but to give the owner the satisfaction of scolding those who sit on it.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **divorces God's commands from His revealed desires**. It creates a disjunction between what God says He wants (that all should repent and live) and what the system says He has secretly decreed (that most should not be able to repent and will die). This creates a schizophrenic deity. The biblical worldview, however, insists on the integrity of God's character. His commands are an expression of His heart. He commands all to repent because He genuinely desires all to repent and has made a way for that to be possible through the all-sufficient sacrifice of His Son.

Question 16. What does it mean that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4)?

Answer 16. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The statement in 1 Timothy 2:4 is one of the most direct and unambiguous expressions of God's universal, benevolent will for the salvation of humanity. It means exactly what it says: God's desire, His disposition, His good pleasure, is for **every single person to be saved** and to come to a knowledge of the truth. This verse, along with its context which speaks of Christ giving Himself "a ransom for all" (v. 6), serves as a powerful anchor for the doctrine of a universal atonement. It reveals the loving heart of the Father, who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The word "will" in this verse does not refer to God's decretive will (what He decrees must happen), but to His will of desire. Clearly, not all men are saved, so this "will" can be resisted by human rebellion. But the fact that this is His desire completely undermines any theological system that teaches God has eternally and unconditionally willed for the majority of humanity to be damned. It presents a God who has made a genuine provision for all and sincerely desires the salvation of all.

Scripture References: 1 Timothy 2:3-6, 2 Peter 3:9, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 18:32, Ezekiel 33:11, John 3:16-17, Titus 2:11

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that "all men" does not mean "every single person," but rather "all kinds of men" or "men from all nations" (i.e., both Jews and Gentiles). While it is true that God desires to save all *types* of people, this interpretation does unnecessary violence to the plain meaning of the word "all." In the immediate context, Paul urges prayer "for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority." No one argues this means we should only pray for "some kings" or "some kinds of rulers." The word "all" is used consistently in its universal sense. To change its meaning in verse 4 is an act of interpretive gerrymandering designed to protect a system. Another **rebuttal** is to appeal to the "two wills" of God, claiming His "decretive will" is to save only the elect, while His "preceptive will" desires the salvation of all. This, however, creates a God who is at war with Himself, secretly decreeing the opposite of what He openly desires.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The need to reinterpret "all men" is a theological necessity for **strict Calvinism**, as taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. The system, as laid out by **John Calvin** (1536) and solidified at the **Synod of Dort** (1618-1619), cannot allow for a genuine, universal saving will in God, as it would contradict the doctrines of unconditional election and limited atonement. Therefore, great effort is expended in commentaries and sermons to explain away the plain meaning of this and other universal-sounding texts. This contrasts with the

Arminian, Wesleyan, and Lutheran traditions, which generally take this verse at face value as an expression of God's universal love and desire.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:18, Ephesians 1:11, John 6:37

Verses of Correction: 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, Ezekiel 33:11, 1 John 2:2, John 12:32

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that "all" means "all kinds of" is an example of the **Equivocation** fallacy, where the meaning of a key word is shifted to support a conclusion. The word "all" is used universally in the context ("pray for all men"), but its meaning is suddenly restricted when it comes to salvation in verse 4. This is an inconsistent and self-serving method of interpretation. It's like reading a will that says, "I leave all my possessions to my children," and then arguing that "all my possessions" doesn't mean every single possession, but only "all kinds of possessions," allowing you to exclude the most valuable items. The plain meaning is intentionally obscured to achieve a desired outcome.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God cannot have desires that are not actualized**. This philosophical premise, often rooted in a particular view of omnipotence, insists that if God truly desires something, it must come to pass. Therefore, since not all men are saved, God must not truly desire all men to be saved. The Bible, however, presents a more complex, relational picture. It shows a God who has desires that are resisted by His creatures (e.g., "how often would I have gathered you... but ye would not!"). He has sovereignly granted a degree of freedom to His creation, and He can have genuine desires that are not fulfilled because of their rebellion, without this diminishing His ultimate power or sovereignty.

Question 17. How does the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:16-24) illustrate the nature of God's call and human response?

Answer 17. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The parable of the great supper is a masterful illustration of the nature of the divine call, revealing it to be both **sincere in its invitation and resistible in its reception**. The parable begins with a certain man making a great supper and bidding many. This represents God's generous and wide call, initially to the nation of Israel. The invitation is genuine; the feast is prepared and the servants are sent. However, the parable immediately shows that this call is not irresistible. The ones who were first bidden "with one consent began to make excuse." They prioritized their land, their business, and their family over the master's invitation. This demonstrates that human beings have the capacity to refuse the call of God, placing the responsibility for their exclusion squarely on their own choices. The master's response is not to force the original guests to come, but to **widen the circle of invitation**, sending his servant out to the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, and then even further to the highways and hedges. This beautifully illustrates the gospel going out to the Gentiles and the outcasts after being rejected by the religious establishment. The parable is a story of a resistible call, a responsible refusal, and a resulting expansion of grace to all who are willing to come.

Scripture References: Luke 14:16-24, Matthew 22:1-14, Proverbs 1:24-28, Acts 13:46

Anticipated Rebuttals: A Calvinistic interpretation might argue that the first group who refused were the non-elect, and their refusal was part of God's eternal decree. The second group, who were compelled to come in, represent the elect being drawn by irresistible grace. This interpretation, however, has to read a great deal into the text. The parable doesn't say the first group was *unable* to come, but that they were *unwilling* to come—they "made excuse." Furthermore, the word "compel" in Luke 14:23 does not necessitate physical or irresistible force. It means to strongly urge or constrain, as one would do when earnestly inviting a guest. It speaks of the urgency and persuasiveness of the call, not its coercive nature. The parable's natural reading is about the contrast between a prideful refusal and a humble acceptance of a genuine offer.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of this parable through a deterministic lens is common in **hyper-Calvinistic** circles. The need to see the "compelling" of the second group as irresistible grace is required by the system laid out by **John Calvin** and his successors. However, many commentators throughout history, including many early church fathers and later figures like **John Wesley** (18th century), have seen this parable as a clear depiction of God's universal offer and humanity's freedom to reject it. Wesley, in particular, used such parables to argue against the Calvinistic doctrines of irresistible grace and limited atonement, emphasizing instead God's desire for all to be saved and the responsibility of each person to respond to His gracious invitation.

Verses of Apparent Support: Luke 14:23 ("compel them to come in"), Romans 9:18

Verses of Correction: Luke 14:18 ("they all with one consent began to make excuse"), Matthew 23:37, Acts 7:51

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The deterministic interpretation of this parable commits the **Contextomy** fallacy (also known as quoting out of context). It focuses heavily on the single word "compel" in verse 23 while downplaying the clear context of the preceding verses, which detail the willful refusal of the first group of guests. By isolating one word and infusing it with a theological meaning ("irresistible force") that the broader narrative does not support, the argument distorts the primary message of the parable. The story is about the transition of the gospel offer from the unwilling to the willing, not about two different kinds of divine mechanics.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's actions must be understood in terms of force and power rather than persuasion and relationship**. This philosophical bias sees divine interaction as a matter of coercion. If God wants something done, He must force it to happen. The Bible, however, consistently portrays God's primary mode of interaction with humanity as relational and persuasive. He reasons with His people, He pleads with them, He sends prophets, He displays wonders—all to woo and win their hearts. The idea of a "compelling" that is actually a loving, urgent persuasion is more consistent with the character of the biblical God than the idea of a metaphysical, irresistible force.

Question 18. What is the relationship between faith, repentance, and hearing the Gospel message?

Answer 18. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The relationship between hearing the Gospel, repentance, and faith is an inseparable, logical, and chronological sequence that forms the very foundation of conversion. The process is initiated by a divine act: the proclamation of the Gospel. As Romans 10:17 states, "So then faith cometh by **hearing**, and hearing by the word of God." The Gospel—the good news of Christ's atoning death, burial, and resurrection—is the power of God unto salvation, and it must be heard or read. When this message is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit performs His convicting work, leading the hearer to an understanding of their sin and their need for a Savior. The required human response to this divine initiative is twofold, like two sides of the same coin. First, there is **repentance**, which is a change of mind about sin and self, a turning *away* from rebellion and toward God. Second, there is **faith**, which is a trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ, a turning *to* Him as the only hope for salvation. These two are intrinsically linked; one cannot truly repent without placing faith in Christ, and one cannot have genuine faith in Christ without repenting of their sin. Hearing is the catalyst, and repentance and faith are the unified, life-giving response.

Scripture References: Mark 1:15, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 11:21, Acts 16:31, Acts 20:21, Romans 10:9-10, Romans 10:14-17, Hebrews 4:2

Anticipated Rebuttals: A common **rebuttal** from some theological systems is to reorder the sequence, placing regeneration *before* faith. The argument is that a person must first be irresistibly born again by the Spirit, and only then are they able to repent and believe. This is done to preserve the doctrine of Total Inability. This, however, reverses the biblical order. The Bible says we are "born again... by the word of God" (1 Peter 1:23), indicating the Word (the Gospel) is the instrument that produces new birth, not the other way around. It also makes the command to believe problematic. Why command a person to do something (believe) that they are incapable of doing until after something else (regeneration) has been secretly done to them? The biblical sequence is clear: God speaks, the Spirit convicts, man responds in repentance and faith, and God regenerates.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The reordering of salvation to place regeneration before faith is a hallmark of **Calvinistic** theology, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This theological sequence, known as the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation), was a logical necessity of the system developed by **John Calvin** (1536) and his followers. If man is totally unable to respond, then God must act first monergistically (working alone) to regenerate the sinner, who then, as a consequence of this new nature, will inevitably believe. This view is a significant departure from that of the Anabaptists, Arminians, and most Baptists, who maintain the biblical order of the gospel call preceding the human response of faith, which then results in regeneration.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 3:3, John 6:63, Ephesians 2:5, 1 John 5:1

Verses of Correction: Romans 10:17, 1 Peter 1:23, James 1:18, John 20:31, Acts 11:21

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that regeneration must precede faith commits the **Affirming the Consequent** fallacy. This is a formal fallacy with the structure: If P, then Q. Q, therefore P. The argument goes: "If a person is regenerate (P), then they will have faith (Q). This person has faith (Q). Therefore, they must be regenerate (P)." While the first premise is true (a

regenerate person will have faith), the conclusion does not logically follow. It doesn't prove that regeneration is the *cause* of faith in a chronological sense. It's like arguing, "If it is raining, the ground will be wet. The ground is wet. Therefore, it must be raining." The ground could be wet for other reasons (sprinklers, a fire hydrant, etc.). Similarly, faith is the God-ordained instrument that leads to the state of regeneration.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the human will as purely passive in the process of conversion**. This philosophical position, rooted in determinism, sees the will not as a faculty of choice that can be persuaded, but as a state of being that must be fundamentally changed before it can act. It treats the soul like a dead battery that must be completely replaced by God before it can power any action, including the act of faith. The Bible, however, presents the will as a faculty that, while fallen and in bondage, can be and is addressed, wooed, and persuaded by the truth of the gospel and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, enabling it to make a genuine response.

Question 19. Can a person be regenerated or "born again" before they have heard and believed the Gospel?

Answer 19. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The biblical evidence overwhelmingly indicates that a person cannot be regenerated or "born again" before they have heard and believed the Gospel message. The Word of God is presented as the very instrument or seed through which new life is imparted. The Apostle Peter is explicit on this point, stating that believers are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23). James echoes this truth: "Of his own will begat he us **with the word of truth**" (James 1:18). The Gospel is not merely information for the already-regenerate mind to process; it is the life-giving power of God itself. To suggest that regeneration happens in a vacuum, apart from the hearing of the gospel, is to sever the link that Scripture makes plain. The divine order is consistent: the Spirit uses the Word to bring conviction and illumination, which then elicits the response of faith, and in that moment of saving faith, the believer is born again. The idea of a secret, pre-faith regeneration has no scriptural warrant and is a philosophical necessity for a deterministic system, not a biblical reality.

Scripture References: 1 Peter 1:23, James 1:18, Romans 10:14-17, John 20:31, Ephesians 1:13, Galatians 3:2, Hebrews 4:2

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is the argument from Total Inability: a spiritually "dead" person cannot believe, therefore they must be made alive (regenerated) first. This argument, as previously addressed, rests on a faulty, overly literal interpretation of the metaphor of spiritual "death." It ignores the fact that the biblically "dead" are still commanded to hear, repent, and believe. Another **rebuttal** might point to the salvation of infants who die, arguing they are regenerated without hearing the gospel. This, however, is a separate theological category. The Bible is largely silent on the mechanism of infant salvation, but it is clear that for accountable individuals, the normative path to regeneration is through hearing and believing the Word. Using a special case (infants) to define the rule for all others is an invalid line of reasoning. The prescribed path for adults is clear.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of "regeneration precedes faith" is a cornerstone of **Calvinistic** soteriology, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** traditions. It is the logical outflow of the doctrine of Total Inability. If man is a spiritual corpse, then God must act alone (monergism) to sovereignly regenerate him, after which the person will infallibly exercise faith. This systematic formulation, originating with **Augustine** and developed by **John Calvin** (1536), is necessary to maintain the coherence of the TULIP system. It stands in direct opposition to the teachings of **Anabaptists, Arminians, and most Baptists**, who hold that the gospel call enables a faith response, which then results in the new birth.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 3:3-8, John 5:21, Titus 3:5, 1 John 5:1

Verses of Correction: 1 Peter 1:23, James 1:18, Romans 10:17, John 5:24, Galatians 3:26

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for pre-faith regeneration commits the **Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc** fallacy (after this, therefore because of this). The argument observes that all who are saved have been regenerated and have faith, and then incorrectly assumes a specific causal order: that regeneration *must* have happened first to *cause* faith. It confuses correlation with a specific and unproven chronological causation. It's like observing that a fire truck is always present at a big fire and concluding that the fire truck must have arrived first to cause the fire. The biblical evidence points to the opposite causal chain: the hearing of the Word, through the Spirit's power, causes the faith that results in regeneration.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the human soul in purely mechanistic terms**. This philosophical error treats the soul like a machine that is either "on" (regenerate) or "off" (unregenerate). In this view, the machine must be switched "on" by an external force before any of its functions, like "faith," can operate. The Bible, however, presents the soul in relational and organic terms. It is not a machine to be switched on, but a heart to be persuaded, a mind to be illuminated, and a will to be wooed. The Word of God is not a mechanical switch; it is a living seed that, when planted in a heart prepared by the Spirit, germinates into the new life of faith.

Question 20. How does the Bible define "justification," and is it a one-time declaration or a lifelong process?

Answer 20. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): Justification, according to the precise legal language of the New Testament, is a **one-time, instantaneous, and irreversible judicial act of God**. It is not a process, but a verdict. It is the moment when God, the righteous Judge, declares a believing sinner to be righteous in His sight. This declaration is not based on the sinner's own works, character, or future potential. It is based entirely on their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Through this faith, the perfect righteousness of Christ is **imputed**, or legally credited, to the believer's account. Paul's statement in Romans 8:30 places justification in a sequence of completed, past-tense actions: "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also **justified**: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." The use of the past tense is critical. For the believer, justification is not something they are working toward; it is a status they already possess. To confuse justification (our legal standing before God) with bearing fruit (our ongoing growth in following Christ) is a catastrophic error that undermines the very

foundation of grace and replaces the assurance of a finished work with the anxiety of an ongoing performance review.

Scripture References: Acts 13:39, Romans 3:24, Romans 3:26, Romans 3:28, Romans 4:5, Romans 5:1, Romans 5:9, Romans 8:30, Romans 8:33-34, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:11, Galatians 3:24, Titus 3:7

Anticipated Rebuttals: The most common **rebuttal** comes from misinterpreting the book of James, particularly James 2:24: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." This is presented as a direct contradiction of Paul's teaching of justification by faith alone. However, Paul and James are not in conflict; they are addressing different problems. Paul is arguing against legalists who believed they could be saved by the works of the Law. James is arguing against libertines who claimed to have faith but had no corresponding works to prove it. Paul is discussing the *root* of justification (faith alone), while James is discussing the *fruit* of justification (works that demonstrate real faith). James is saying that the kind of faith that justifies is a faith that is never "only" in the sense of being alone or barren; it is a living faith that inevitably produces the work of obedience.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine that justification is a lifelong process, rather than a one-time declaration, is a central tenet of **Roman Catholicism**. The **Council of Trent** (1545-1563) explicitly condemned the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone and defined justification as a process of inner renewal and sanctification, infused by grace through the sacraments, through which a person becomes progressively more righteous. This view, which conflates justification and sanctification, is also present in some forms of **Arminian-Wesleyan** theology, which can sometimes blur the line between the two. In contrast, the doctrine of justification as a purely forensic, one-time declaration is a cornerstone of the **Lutheran and Reformed** traditions, who see it as the "article upon which the church stands or falls."

Verses of Apparent Support: James 2:21-24, Matthew 7:21, Revelation 22:14

Verses of Correction: Romans 3:28, Romans 4:2-5, Romans 5:1, Galatians 2:16, Philippians 3:9, Titus 3:5-7

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that conflates justification and sanctification often commits the **Category Error** fallacy. This fallacy incorrectly assigns something to a category to which it does not belong. Justification and sanctification are two distinct, albeit related, theological categories. Justification is a *legal* category: it changes our standing before God. Sanctification is a *moral* or *transformative* category: it changes our character. To treat them as the same thing is like confusing a marriage certificate (a legal declaration of status) with the ongoing relationship of a marriage (a process of growth and intimacy). The certificate is a one-time event that establishes the status; the relationship is a lifelong process that flows from that status.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's declaration must correspond to an existing internal reality**. This philosophical premise insists that God cannot declare someone "righteous" unless they are, in fact, inherently and personally righteous at that moment. This view struggles with the

concept of legal imputation. The Bible, however, operates on a covenantal and legal framework. God can legally declare us righteous *in Christ* because our sins have been legally paid for by Christ and His perfect righteousness has been legally credited to our account. The declaration creates the new reality, not the other way around. It is a creative, powerful word, like when God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Election and Predestination

Question 21. When the New Testament uses the term "elect," is it referring to specific individuals chosen for salvation from eternity, or to the nation of Israel and, by extension, the church?

Answer 21. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): When the New Testament speaks of the "elect," it is not using a simple, one-size-fits-all term for individuals predestined to heaven. The meaning is highly dependent on the context, and a failure to trace its usage is the source of great theological error. In the Gospels, when Jesus speaks of the "elect's sake" in the context of the tribulation in Judea, He is clearly referring to His people, the **nation of Israel**. In the epistles, particularly Romans, Paul uses the term to wrestle with the great mystery of his day: how God's promises to His chosen, "elect" nation of Israel could still be true now that the gospel was being accepted by the Gentiles and rejected by most Jews. The term is primarily **corporate and covenantal**. God chose a people for Himself—first, national Israel, to be the vessel of His revelation and the lineage of the Messiah. Now, in the New Covenant, the "elect" is the Church, a "chosen generation" made up of both Jews and Gentiles who are united by faith in Christ. While this corporate body is made up of chosen individuals, the primary emphasis is on the people group, not on a secret roll call of individuals pre-selected for heaven while others were pre-selected for hell.

Scripture References: Deuteronomy 7:6, Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 45:4, Matthew 24:22, Matthew 24:24, Matthew 24:31, Mark 13:20, Luke 18:7, Romans 8:33, Romans 9:11, Romans 11:5, Romans 11:7, Romans 11:28, Colossians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 2 Timothy 2:10, Titus 1:1, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 2:9

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** will be to point to verses like Romans 8:33, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" and argue that this must refer to individuals, since individuals are the ones who are justified. This is true, but it doesn't prove that the election itself was an unconditional, pre-temporal decree of individuals. The verse is describing the present security of those who are *already* part of the elect body, the church. The question is, how does one become part of that body? The Bible's answer is by faith. Another **rebuttal** is that if election is corporate, it doesn't guarantee individual salvation. This is precisely the point the Bible makes. Being a member of elect Israel did not guarantee salvation, as John the Baptist warned. And Paul warns the grafted-in Gentile believers (the new corporate elect) that they too can be "cut off." The security is in Christ, the true Elect One, and we become part of His elect body by faith.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of "elect" as referring exclusively to individuals unconditionally predestined to salvation is the cornerstone of **Calvinism (Reformed, Presbyterian churches)**. This interpretation is a necessity for their entire system. It was

systematically developed by **John Calvin** (1536), who built upon the later work of **Augustine**. This view atomizes the concept of election, removing it from its rich, salvation-historical context of God choosing a covenant people (Israel, then the Church) for His purposes in the world, and turns it into an abstract, philosophical doctrine about God's secret decrees concerning individual souls.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 8:29-33, John 15:16, Acts 13:48, Ephesians 1:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:13

Verses of Correction: 1 Peter 2:9, Deuteronomy 7:6, Isaiah 65:9, Romans 9:6-8, Romans 11:1-7, Romans 11:20-22

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that "elect" must always mean "unconditionally predestined individuals" commits the **Fallacy of Inconsistent Application** (a form of special pleading). It applies a rigid, systematic definition to the word "elect" but fails to apply the same rigidity to other biblical terms. For example, the Bible says Christ died for "the world" and "all men," but the system insists these universal terms must be interpreted in a limited way. Yet, it insists the term "elect" must always be interpreted in its most absolute, individualistic sense. This is an inconsistent hermeneutic, where the rules of interpretation are changed to fit the needs of the theological system. It's a classic case of having your cake and eating it too.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that prioritizes **individualism over the biblical emphasis on covenantal community**. This is a distinctly modern, Western philosophical bias. The Bible is a book about God's dealings with families, tribes, and nations. It is a story of covenants made with a people. The individual finds their identity and salvation *within* that covenant community. The Calvinistic view of election reverses this, making the individual's secret, eternal decree the primary reality, and the church merely a collection of these pre-selected individuals. It imposes a modern, individualistic mindset onto an ancient, covenantal text.

Question 22. How does the context of Romans 9, which focuses on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, affect the interpretation of election?

Answer 22. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The context of Romans 9 is not merely a background detail; it is the **controlling factor** for the entire interpretation of election within the chapter. The chapter does not exist in a vacuum. It is the heart of a three-chapter argument (Romans 9-11) where Paul is wrestling with a single, massive problem: Has God's word failed because His chosen people, Israel, have largely rejected their Messiah, while the Gentiles are now being saved? To answer this, Paul demonstrates that God's purpose has never been based on mere physical lineage but on His sovereign choice. The examples of Isaac over Ishmael, and Jacob over Esau, are not about predestining individuals to heaven or hell. They are about God sovereignly choosing the line through which His **covenantal promises and the Messiah would come**. The example of Pharaoh is about God's sovereign right to raise up and use even a rebellious ruler for His own redemptive purposes—namely, demonstrating His power and making His name known. The entire chapter is about God's sovereign freedom in history to show mercy on whom He will show mercy—in this case, the Gentiles—and to harden whom He will harden—in this case, the prideful,

unbelieving portion of Israel. To lift these verses out of their Jew-Gentile, salvation-historical context and use them as a proof text for an abstract, philosophical doctrine of individual predestination is to fundamentally misread Paul's entire point.

Scripture References: Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36, Genesis 21:12, Malachi 1:2-3, Exodus 9:16, Hosea 2:23, Isaiah 10:22-23

Anticipated Rebuttals: The main **rebuttal** is to insist that while the context may be national, the principles of God's sovereign choice revealed are universal and apply to individuals. The argument is that the way God chose Jacob over Esau for national purposes reveals the *way* He chooses individuals for salvific purposes. This, however, is an unwarranted leap. It assumes that God acts in exactly the same way in every sphere. But the Bible shows God acting differently in different contexts. His choice of a king is different from His offer of salvation. Furthermore, this **rebuttal** conveniently ignores the outcome for the "non-elect" in the examples. Esau was still blessed by God with a great nation. The hardening of Israel is not presented as final, as Paul spends all of Romans 11 explaining how they can be "grafted in again." These are not pictures of unconditional, eternal damnation, but of God's shifting purposes in history.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The decontextualized reading of Romans 9 is the primary pillar upon which **Calvinistic** soteriology is built. It is the go-to chapter for defenders of Unconditional Election and is central to the teaching of **Reformed, Presbyterian, and Sovereign Grace** churches. **Augustine of Hippo** was one of the first to systematically interpret this chapter as teaching individual predestination to salvation and damnation. **John Calvin** (1536) made this interpretation the linchpin of his system, calling it the "dreadful decree." This interpretation has been the source of immense controversy throughout church history, as it appears to contradict the Bible's broader teachings on God's love, justice, and the universal call of the gospel.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:11-13, Romans 9:15-18, Romans 9:21-23

Verses of Correction: Romans 9:1-5 (establishes the context as Israel), Romans 9:30-32 (explains Israel's failure as seeking righteousness by works, not a decree), Romans 10:13 ("whosoever"), Romans 11:23 (Israel can be grafted back in)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The deterministic interpretation of Romans 9 relies heavily on the **Contextomy** fallacy (quoting out of context). It isolates verses 11-23 from the explicit context established in verses 1-5 (Paul's sorrow for Israel) and the resolution provided in chapters 10 and 11 (salvation is now available to all through faith). By treating this section as a standalone treatise on metaphysics, the argument ignores the narrative flow and the specific historical problem Paul is addressing. It's like pulling a single sentence out of a long legal document about a corporate merger and claiming it's a statement about marital love. The meaning is completely distorted when divorced from its context.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's sovereignty must be expressed through meticulous, deterministic control, rather than through covenantal faithfulness**. This is a philosophical preference for a God who operates like an engineer or a programmer over the biblical picture of a

God who operates as a King, a Father, and a covenant-keeper. The Bible's story is not about the abstract mechanics of divine decrees, but about the unfolding drama of God's faithfulness to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and how those promises are ultimately fulfilled in Christ in a way that surprisingly and gloriously includes the entire world.

Question 23. What was John the Baptist's warning to the "elect" nation of Israel in Matthew 3, and what does it imply about the security of the elect?

Answer 23. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): John the Baptist's fiery sermon to the religious leaders of Israel in Matthew 3 is a direct and devastating assault on the notion of unconditional security based on an elect status. When the Pharisees and Sadducees—the very heart of the "elect" nation—came to him, he did not affirm their position. He called them a "generation of vipers" and issued a stark warning: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." He was dismantling their false security, which was based on their physical lineage and covenant status. His most powerful statement, however, was his analogy of the axe: "And now also the **axe is laid unto the root of the trees**: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." This implies, with terrifying clarity, that **membership in the elect body is not enough**. Even a branch of the chosen tree of Israel could be cut off if it did not produce the fruit of genuine repentance. This directly contradicts any idea of "once elect, always elect." It establishes the principle that covenant status must be validated by a life of faith and obedience, and that a privileged position can be forfeited through unbelief and fruitlessness.

Scripture References: Matthew 3:7-12, Luke 3:7-9, John 15:1-6, Romans 11:20-22

Anticipated Rebuttals: A common **rebuttal** is to argue that John was speaking to false professors or "unregenerate" members of the covenant, not the "true" elect within Israel. This, however, is an argument from silence and imposes a later theological category onto the text. John addresses them based on their identity as the leaders of Israel, the children of Abraham. He makes no distinction between a "true" and "false" elect. His warning is universal to all within that covenant community. Another **rebuttal** is that this is Old Covenant language and doesn't apply to the security of the New Covenant believer. But the principle of judgment for fruitlessness is carried directly into the New Testament by Jesus Himself in the parable of the vine and the branches (John 15) and by Paul in his warning to the grafted-in Gentiles (Romans 11). The principle that God judges based on fruit, not just status, is timeless.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The implications of John the Baptist's sermon are often minimized or explained away in theological systems that teach Unconditional Election and Perseverance of the Saints, namely **Calvinism**. The teachings of **John Calvin** (1536) and the **Canons of Dort** (1619) insist that the truly elect can neither totally nor finally fall away from grace. John's sermon presents a direct challenge to this, which is why it must be reinterpreted to apply only to "hypocrites" within Israel rather than to the elect nation itself. This contrasts with **Arminian, Wesleyan, and Anabaptist** traditions, which see John's warning as a clear affirmation of conditional security and the necessity of a faith that produces fruit.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 John 2:19

Verses of Correction: Matthew 3:10, John 15:2, Romans 11:22, Hebrews 6:4-8, 2 Peter 2:20-21

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that John's warning only applied to "false professors" within Israel commits the **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The initial premise is, "No true elect person can be cut off." When presented with the evidence of John threatening to cut off the elect (the children of Abraham), the response is, "Ah, but they weren't the *true* elect." This fallacy protects the original assertion by retroactively changing the definition of the group to exclude any counterexamples. It's an unfalsifiable, circular argument that refuses to engage with the evidence as it is presented in the text.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **privileges a metaphysical status over a relational reality**. The Calvinistic system views "election" as an unchangeable, metaphysical property infused into an individual from eternity. John the Baptist, and the rest of the Bible, views election as a **covenantal relationship**. Relationships are dynamic and have terms. A son is still a son, but he can be disinherited if he is rebellious. A branch is part of a vine, but it can be pruned if it is fruitless. By turning a living, covenantal relationship into a static, metaphysical property, the system drains the urgency and reality from the Bible's many warnings.

Question 24. According to Ephesians 1, what are believers predestined to? Is it salvation itself, or adoption and conformity to Christ's image?

Answer 24. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): A precise reading of Ephesians 1 reveals that predestination is not about God pre-selecting certain individuals for salvation and others for damnation. Rather, it describes the glorious, predetermined **destination and inheritance** for all who are "in Christ." The text says God has "predestinated us unto the **adoption of children** by Jesus Christ to himself" (v. 5) and that this was so "that we should be **holy and without blame** before him in love" (v. 4). This is echoed in Romans 8:29, which states that God did "predestinate [us] to be **conformed to the image of his Son**." The focus of predestination is the outcome, not the initial selection. It is God's eternal plan for the "end game" of every believer. Think of it as a travel brochure for a glorious destination. The brochure describes the destination in detail, a destination planned long ago. It doesn't, however, name the specific individuals who will be forced to get on the plane. The decision to get on the plane—to place one's faith in Christ—is a separate matter. Predestination is God's blueprint for the glorification of His sons and daughters; it is not a fatalistic script that negates the genuine invitation of the gospel.

Scripture References: Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:11-12, Romans 8:29-30

Anticipated Rebuttals: The common **rebuttal** is to argue that this distinction is meaningless, because if God predestined the end (conformity to Christ), He must have also predestined the means (the faith of the specific individuals). This argument assumes a deterministic model of causality that the Bible does not require. God can predetermine a destination for all who choose to embark on a journey without predetermining who will make that choice. For example, a government can build a beautiful city of refuge and decree that all who enter its gates will be safe and receive citizenship. The destination and its privileges are predestined, but the choice to enter

is still a real one. The Bible presents a God who has prepared an incredible inheritance and destination for His children, and He invites all to become His children through faith.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of predestination as the pre-selection of individuals for salvation is a central doctrine of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. This view, articulated by **Augustine** and systematized by **John Calvin** (1536), sees predestination as the logical starting point of salvation. God's "dreadful decree" (as Calvin himself called it) is the ultimate cause of all that follows. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees predestination as being based on God's foreknowledge of who would believe. It also contrasts with the corporate view, common among many Anabaptists and others, which sees predestination as describing God's plan for the Church as a body, rather than for specific individuals.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:11, Acts 4:28

Verses of Correction: (The same verses, read in context, define the purpose of predestination) Romans 8:29 ("to be conformed to the image of his Son"), Ephesians 1:5 ("unto the adoption of children"), Ephesians 1:4 ("that we should be holy")

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that predestining the end necessitates predestining the specific individuals commits a **Non Sequitur** fallacy ("it does not follow"). The conclusion does not logically follow from the premise. The premise is that God has a predetermined plan for the ultimate state of believers. The conclusion is that God must have therefore predetermined which specific individuals would become believers. This is a leap in logic. A plan for the destination does not logically require a pre-written passenger list. The Bible allows for a plan that is certain in its outcome for all who participate, while leaving the participation itself as a matter of genuine human response to divine grace.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's plan in terms of a closed, linear script rather than an open, covenantal framework**. The deterministic view sees history as a single, unchangeable line of code written by God. The biblical view is more like a constitution or a covenant. God has established the unchangeable laws, promises, and outcomes of the covenant of grace. He has set the terms and guaranteed the inheritance for all who enter into that covenant by faith. The framework is fixed and predestined, but individuals are still called to freely enter into that framework. The error is to confuse the predestined framework with a predestined cast of characters.

Question 25. How does the doctrine of God's foreknowledge (Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2) relate to the concept of election?

Answer 25. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The doctrine of God's foreknowledge is explicitly presented in Scripture as the **foundation upon which election rests**. The Bible does not teach that God's election is an arbitrary or unconditional choice made in a vacuum. Instead, it is a choice made "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2). The Apostle Paul follows this precise order in Romans 8:29: "For **whom he did foreknow**, he also did

predestinate..." The foreknowledge comes first. God, existing outside of time and knowing the end from the beginning, knew with perfect certainty every person who would freely respond in faith to the gracious offer of the gospel. Based on this perfect foreknowledge, He elected, or chose, them in Christ before the foundation of the world. This does not mean that their foreseen faith *merited* their election. Salvation is always by grace. However, it does mean that their faith was the **God-ordained condition** upon which the election was based. This view perfectly preserves God's sovereignty (He knows all and sets the terms) and human responsibility (man must believe), and it aligns with the character of a God who is just and no respecter of persons.

Scripture References: Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2, Acts 2:23, Romans 11:2

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is to redefine "foreknowledge." It is argued that the Greek word for foreknowledge (*proginosko*) does not simply mean "to know beforehand," but "to fore-love" or "to enter into a relationship with beforehand." Therefore, the verse means, "those whom God chose to love beforehand, He also predestined." This redefinition, however, is not supported by the consistent usage of the word in the Bible. In Acts 26:5, Paul says the Jews "knew" (*proginosko*) him from the beginning; this clearly doesn't mean they "fore-loved" him. It means they had prior knowledge of him. The attempt to change the meaning of "foreknow" is a theological maneuver designed to remove the basis of God's choice from His knowledge and place it back into His mysterious, unconditional will, thereby protecting the TULIP system from a clear biblical contradiction.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The redefinition of "foreknowledge" is a critical argument within **Calvinistic** theology (**Reformed and Presbyterian**). This interpretive move is necessary to defend the doctrine of Unconditional Election. If foreknowledge simply means to know in advance, then election becomes conditional on foreseen faith, and the 'U' in TULIP collapses. This interpretation was championed by figures like **John Calvin** and has become standard in Reformed apologetics. It stands in contrast to the **Arminian/Wesleyan** position, which takes foreknowledge at its plain meaning, and was the predominant view of the **early church fathers** before Augustine, who saw God's election as being based on His prescience of human faith.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For re-defining 'know' as intimate) Amos 3:2, Matthew 7:23, John 10:14

Verses of Correction: Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2, Acts 26:5, 2 Peter 3:17 (uses the same root word for "knowing before")

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The redefinition of "foreknowledge" is a clear case of the **Etymological Fallacy**. This fallacy wrongly assumes that the present-day meaning of a word, or its meaning in a different context, is its correct meaning in the specific context being debated. While the Hebrew word for "know" (*yada*) can sometimes imply intimacy (as in "Adam knew Eve his wife"), it does not follow that the Greek word *proginosko* always carries this meaning, especially when its other uses in the New Testament clearly refer to simple prior knowledge. It's like arguing that because the word "cool" can mean "fashionable," every historical document that says "the weather is cool" is actually talking about stylish weather.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's knowledge must be causal**. This is a philosophical position that struggles to separate knowing from causing. In this view, if God knows something will happen, He must have somehow caused it to happen. Therefore, if God foreknows who will believe, He must have caused their belief. The Bible, however, presents an omniscient God who is not bound by the linear time that He created. He can know the free choices of the future without causing them, just as a person watching a parade from a tall building can see the end of the parade at the same time as the beginning, without causing the parade to move.

Question 26. If election is unconditional, why does the Bible place so much emphasis on the conditions of faith and repentance?

Answer 26. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Bible's relentless emphasis on the conditions of faith and repentance stands as a formidable architectural challenge to the very foundation of unconditional election. The Word of God is not a book of abstract decrees; it is a book of covenantal invitations, and every invitation has terms. From beginning to end, the path to salvation is paved with divine conditions. "He that **believeth** on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). "**Repent** ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). These are not suggestions; they are the non-negotiable requirements for reconciliation with God. If election were truly unconditional, a sovereign decree with no regard for human response, these commands would be rendered a bizarre and hollow exercise. Why command a man to believe if his belief is not a genuine condition but merely an inevitable consequence of a secret, unconditional election? Why command all men everywhere to repent if the ability to do so is only granted to a select few? The sheer weight of these conditional statements in Scripture forces an inescapable conclusion: **human response is a real and necessary component of the salvation process**. God, in His sovereignty, has decreed that the door to His kingdom is opened by the key of faith. To argue that He also unconditionally decreed who would be given the key is to make the command to "knock" a piece of divine theater.

Scripture References: John 3:16, John 3:36, Mark 1:15, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, Hebrews 5:9, Hebrews 11:6, Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 3:14

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that faith and repentance are not conditions *for* election, but rather the *gifts* of God that are the certain *result* of election. The argument is that God unconditionally elects a person, and as a result of that election, He irresistibly grants them the gifts of repentance and faith. This neatly preserves the system, but it does so by redefining the plain meaning of a condition. It also fails to account for the many who hear the gospel and are commanded to believe but do not. If faith is a gift automatically given to the elect, why is the command to believe issued universally? Furthermore, this view struggles with verses like Hebrews 5:9, which says Christ is the author of eternal salvation "unto all them that **obey** him." Obedience is presented as a condition for receiving the salvation He authors. The system must twist the clear conditional language of the Bible into a deterministic script to maintain its coherence.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of Unconditional Election is the 'U' in the TULIP acronym, and it is a defining tenet of **Calvinism**. It is taught in **Reformed, Presbyterian, and Sovereign Grace** churches. This doctrine, which posits that God's choice of the elect is based

solely on His own will and not on any foreseen faith or repentance, was systematically formulated by **John Calvin** (1536), following the theological trajectory of **Augustine**. This view necessitates the reinterpretation of all conditional language in the Bible. Instead of being genuine requirements, faith and repentance become the pre-programmed responses of the elect, a view that stands in contrast to the majority of Christian traditions which see them as genuine, Spirit-enabled conditions for salvation.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:16, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 1:13, 2 Timothy 1:9, Philippians 1:29

Verses of Correction: John 3:16, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, Deuteronomy 30:19, Joshua 24:15, Revelation 22:17

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that faith is the result, not the condition, of election commits the **Special Pleading** fallacy. It creates a special, unstated rule to protect its belief. The argument says, "In all normal circumstances, when an offer has a condition, the condition must be met to receive the offer. But in the special case of salvation, the offer is unconditionally given, and the 'condition' is just an automatic result of receiving the offer." This creates a unique, self-serving exception to how conditional language works everywhere else. It's like a contest that says, "You will win if you have the winning ticket," but then arguing that having the winning ticket is not the condition of winning, but the automatic result of being pre-selected as a winner.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the relationship between God and man in terms of unilateral power rather than covenantal agreement**. A covenant, by its very nature, involves terms and conditions. It is a relational pact. The deterministic view replaces this rich, relational, covenantal framework with a sterile, metaphysical model of raw, deterministic power. In this model, there are no real conditions, only causes and effects. God's decree is the cause, and the human response is merely the effect. This philosophical preference for a power-based model over a covenant-based one drains the Bible of its relational drama and turns its conditional promises into mere descriptions of an unchangeable script.

Question 27. What is the "Book of Life," and what does the possibility of names being "blotted out" (Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5) suggest about unconditional election?

Answer 27. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Book of Life is a celestial record, a divine registry of those who are heirs of eternal life. The most striking and theologically significant feature of this book is not who is written in it, but the explicit biblical statement that names can be **blotted out** of it. This single, undeniable fact serves as a powerful refutation of the entire system of unconditional election and eternal security. In Exodus 32:33, God Himself tells Moses, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." In Revelation 3:5, the risen Christ makes a promise to the overcomer: "I will **not blot out his name** out of the book of life," a promise that is meaningless if the possibility of being blotted out does not exist. If a name can be removed, then its inclusion was, by definition, conditional. This suggests a beautiful and harmonious model: God, in His universal love and foreknowledge, wrote every name in His book from the foundation of the world, based on the sufficient sacrifice of the Lamb. However, a

person's place in that book is maintained by a living, persevering faith. Through unrepentant sin and final apostasy, that place can be forfeited. This biblical doctrine perfectly harmonizes God's sovereign, gracious initiative with man's solemn responsibility to endure to the end.

Scripture References: Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, Daniel 12:1, Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:12, Revelation 20:15, Revelation 21:27, Revelation 22:19

Anticipated Rebuttals: Proponents of unconditional election have two primary **rebuttals**. First, they argue that the "Book of Life" in the Old Testament is a record of physical life or earthly citizenship, not eternal salvation, and that the "Lamb's Book of Life" in the New Testament is a separate, unchangeable book. The Bible, however, makes no such distinction and uses the terms interchangeably. Daniel 12:1 links being "found written in the book" with deliverance and resurrection to "everlasting life." Second, they argue that the warnings about being blotted out are merely hypothetical, intended to motivate believers, but could never actually happen to a "true" elect person. This turns God's solemn warnings into a form of divine bluffing. It asks us to believe that when God warns of a consequence, He doesn't actually mean it. This undermines the integrity and plain sense of Scripture.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints (the 'P' in TULIP), which insists that the elect can never be "lost" or have their salvation forfeited, is a central tenet of **Calvinism**. This doctrine, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches, is directly challenged by the teaching on the Book of Life. The system formalized by **John Calvin** (1536) and the **Canons of Dort** (1619) requires that the list of the saved be eternally fixed and unchangeable. Therefore, the clear biblical statements about names being blotted out must be reinterpreted as hypothetical or as referring to a different, temporary book. This complex explanation is necessary to protect the system from a clear and powerful biblical counter-argument.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 Peter 1:5, Jude 1:24

Verses of Correction: Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 22:19, Psalm 69:28, Hebrews 6:4-6

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the warnings about being blotted out are merely hypothetical commits the **Argument from Incredulity**. This fallacy asserts that a proposition must be false because it is difficult to imagine it being true. The reasoning is, "I cannot imagine how a true believer could ever be blotted out of the Book of Life, therefore the warnings must not be real." It dismisses the plain evidence of the text based on a personal or systematic inability to reconcile it with a preconceived belief. It prioritizes the comfort of the system over the clear, and sometimes uncomfortable, warnings of Scripture. It's like a person standing on a railroad track, arguing, "I can't imagine a train would ever come down this abandoned track, therefore the warning sign must be hypothetical."

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views salvation as a static, metaphysical substance rather than a**

living, covenantal relationship. In the philosophical view, salvation is an "it"—an unchangeable property that is infused into a person at the moment of regeneration. In the biblical view, salvation is a relationship with a "Him"—a living, dynamic covenant with Jesus Christ. Relationships have terms and can be broken. Covenants have conditions and can be violated. By reifying salvation into an object, the system removes the relational and conditional elements that are so central to the biblical narrative, making the idea of being "blotted out" seem philosophically impossible.

Question 28. How does the grafting of the Gentiles into the olive tree in Romans 11 illustrate the nature of election and the possibility of being "cut off"?

Answer 28. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): Paul's analogy of the olive tree in Romans 11 is one of the most devastating critiques of unconditional election and eternal security in all of Scripture. The olive tree represents the covenant people of God, with its root being the patriarchs and the promises made to them. The "natural branches" are the nation of Israel, the original "elect." Paul states with stark clarity that some of these natural branches were **broken off**. Why? Not because of an eternal decree of reprobation, but "because of **unbelief**" (v. 20). Then, he describes the Gentile believers as branches from a "wild olive tree" that have been "grafted in among them." How? Not by an unconditional decree, but "by **faith**" (v. 20). The illustration is a perfect picture of conditional, corporate election. But Paul does not stop there. He issues a direct and chilling warning to the newly grafted-in Gentile believers: "Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee... otherwise, **thou also shalt be cut off**" (v. 20-22). This passage teaches, beyond any doubt, that one's position in the covenant tree of salvation is conditional upon continuing faith and that it is possible for a grafted-in branch to be cut off.

Scripture References: Romans 11:11-24, John 15:1-6, Hebrews 3:12-14, Hebrews 6:4-8, 2 Peter 2:20-22

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that the "branches" being cut off are not "true believers" but only those with a false or temporary faith. This is the classic "No True Scotsman" argument. The text, however, makes no such distinction. The natural branches were part of the covenant people. The wild branches are grafted "in among them" and "partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree." This is the language of genuine participation, not of mere outward profession. To say they were never "truly" in is to impose a systematic category that the text itself does not provide. Another **rebuttal** is that Paul is speaking of nations or covenant communities, not individuals. But nations and communities are made up of individuals. The warning is addressed to "thou" (singular) in verse 22. The warning is personal and direct.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The clear teaching of Romans 11 on the possibility of being "cut off" stands in direct opposition to the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, as taught in **Calvinistic churches (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. The system formalized by **John Calvin** and the **Canons of Dort** (1619) insists that a true elect believer can never finally fall from grace. Therefore, this passage must be reinterpreted to refer only to the loss of outward privilege or to false professors who were never truly saved. This complex explanation is required to protect the system from Paul's plain warning. In contrast, **Arminian, Wesleyan, and Anabaptist** traditions have long pointed to this passage as a key text supporting the doctrine of conditional security.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 10:28-29, Romans 8:35-39, 1 John 2:19, Jude 1:24

Verses of Correction: Romans 11:20-22, John 15:2, John 15:6, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-29, 2 Peter 2:20-21

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the branches cut off were never "true believers" commits the **Ad Hoc Rescue** fallacy. This is a form of special pleading where a new, unsupported element is added to an argument to save it from being falsified. The original belief is, "True believers cannot be cut off." The evidence from Romans 11 shows branches being cut off. To save the belief, the ad hoc element is added: "Ah, but those were not *true* believers." This new condition is added "to the occasion" (ad hoc) without any textual evidence, for the sole purpose of rescuing the original, threatened belief. It's an intellectually dishonest way to handle counterevidence.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the church as an invisible, abstract collection of individuals rather than a visible, covenantal community**. The philosophical preference is for an invisible, true church of the elect, which is distinct from the visible, mixed church on earth. This allows for the dismissal of any warnings or examples of apostasy as only applying to the "visible" church, while the "invisible" church remains perfectly secure. The Bible, however, does not make this sharp distinction. The warnings are addressed to the real, visible communities of believers, with all their mixtures of strength and weakness. The olive tree is a visible, tangible entity, not an abstract, invisible idea.

Question 29. What does it mean that "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14)?

Answer 29. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The statement "many are called, but few are chosen," which concludes the parable of the wedding feast, is a summary of the parable's lesson about the nature of the gospel invitation and the requirements for final acceptance. It does not teach that God only calls a few or that His choice is an arbitrary, unconditional decree. The "call" in the parable is broad and universal. The king's servants go out first to the originally invited guests, and then to the "highways," gathering "as many as they found, both bad and good." This is the **universal call of the gospel**, extended to all. The "chosen," however, are the "few" who not only accept the invitation but also meet the king's requirements. In the parable, this is symbolized by the man who is cast into outer darkness because he does not have on a **wedding garment**. This garment represents the righteousness of Christ, which is received by faith. The man was "called"—he was in the banquet hall—but he was not "chosen" for the final celebration because he came on his own terms, in his own filthy rags, refusing the king's provision. Therefore, the verse teaches that the gospel call goes out to many, but only those who respond with genuine, clothing faith are chosen, or approved, for the kingdom.

Scripture References: Matthew 22:1-14, Luke 14:16-24, Revelation 19:7-9, Isaiah 61:10

Anticipated Rebuttals: The Calvinistic interpretation is that the "call" refers to the general, external call of the gospel, while the "chosen" refers to the elect who have been given the special, internal, effectual call. This reading imposes the "two calls" theory onto the parable. The parable

itself, however, makes no such distinction. There is only one call, one invitation. The difference is in the response of the hearers. Some refuse the call outright, and one accepts the call but refuses the required garment. The parable is about human responsibility in responding to a universal call, not about two different types of divine calls. To argue otherwise is to force the parable onto the procrustean bed of a theological system.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of this verse as evidence for a special, effectual call for the elect is a standard teaching in **Calvinistic churches (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. This is a necessary interpretation for the system developed by **John Calvin (1536)**, which requires a distinction between the general call that all hear and the effectual call that only the elect receive and which irresistibly brings them to salvation. This view contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** interpretation, which sees the verse as a straightforward description of a universal call and a conditional acceptance based on a faith that embraces Christ's righteousness.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 8:30 ("whom he called, them he also justified"), 1 Corinthians 1:23-24

Verses of Correction: Matthew 22:1-14, Isaiah 55:1, Revelation 22:17, Acts 13:46

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for the "two calls" theory based on this verse commits the **Bifurcation** fallacy (a type of false dilemma). It assumes that the call must be one of only two types: either a general, ineffectual call or a special, irresistible call. It fails to consider the biblical alternative: that there is one, universal, sufficient, and enabling call that is made effectual in the life of the one who responds in faith. The effectiveness is not in the type of call, but in the reception of the call. It's like a radio broadcast: there is only one broadcast signal (the call), but it is only "effectual" in the radios that are turned on and tuned in (the response of faith).

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's communication in terms of irresistible force rather than relational persuasion**. The deterministic model requires a "call" that is more like an electrical impulse that forces a machine to turn on. The biblical model, however, presents God's call as a rich, personal, and persuasive invitation. It is the voice of a Father calling to His children, the voice of a King inviting to a feast, the voice of a Savior offering rest. It is a call that appeals to the heart, mind, and will, a call that can be heeded or, tragically, ignored.

Question 30. How can we reconcile the verses on God's sovereign choice with the verses that emphasize human responsibility to "choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15)?

Answer 30. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The reconciliation of divine sovereignty and human responsibility is not found by building a philosophical system that champions one at the expense of the other, but by humbly accepting the full testimony of Scripture as a divine paradox. The Bible, as the inspired Word of God, does not see these two truths as contradictory. It affirms with equal force that God is absolutely sovereign, working all things according to His will, and that man is a responsible moral agent who is commanded to choose. The key to holding these truths in tension is to understand that **God's sovereignty is so complete that it includes His**

decree that man should have a genuine will. The command, "choose you this day whom ye will serve," is not a charade. It is a real command, given to real moral agents, with real, eternal consequences. God's plan is not a fragile blueprint that can be shattered by a human choice. Instead, His infinite wisdom and foreknowledge have woven every free human choice into His unshakeable, overarching redemptive purpose. We are not called to solve this tension with our finite minds, but to believe it with our faithful hearts. The error of both hyper-Calvinism and Pelagianism is the arrogant attempt to make the ways of God fit neatly into the boxes of human logic.

Scripture References: (Sovereignty) Ephesians 1:11, Isaiah 46:10, Daniel 4:35, Romans 9:20-21; (Responsibility) Joshua 24:15, Deuteronomy 30:19, John 5:40, Revelation 22:17; (Paradox) Philippians 2:12-13, Acts 2:23

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** from the deterministic side is that this "paradox" is a logical contradiction and a cop-out. They insist that one must be primary, and for them, it is God's sovereign decree. The primary **rebuttal** from the free-will side is that a truly sovereign God who decrees all things negates any meaningful choice. Both **rebuttals** fail because they are rooted in the assumption that human logic is the final arbiter of divine reality. They refuse to accept that there may be truths about God that transcend our ability to fully comprehend or systematize. The Bible does not present a system; it presents a person. And our relationship with that person involves both His sovereign grace and our responsible faith. To deny either is to create a caricature of the biblical God.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This is the central dividing line of many theological debates. **Calvinism (Reformed, Presbyterian)** resolves the tension by emphasizing divine sovereignty to the point that human freedom becomes, in practice, non-existent in the matter of salvation (a view called compatibilism, which redefines freedom). On the other side, **Pelagianism** (condemned as heresy in 418 AD by the **Council of Carthage**) and some forms of **liberal Christianity** resolve it by emphasizing human freedom to the point that God's sovereignty is limited. The middle ground, which holds both truths in tension, is occupied by various groups, including **Arminians, Wesleyans, and many Baptists and Anabaptists**, and was the general view of the **pre-Augustinian church fathers**.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For Sovereignty alone) Romans 9:18-21, Ephesians 1:11; (For Free Will alone) Joshua 24:15, John 7:17

Verses of Correction: Philippians 2:12-13 ("work out your own salvation... For it is God which worketh in you"), Acts 2:23 ("him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain")

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The attempt to resolve this tension by eliminating one side is a classic **False Dilemma** (or either-or fallacy). It presents two options (absolute divine determinism vs. absolute human autonomy) as the only possibilities. This flawed framing forces a choice between two unbiblical extremes. The Bible itself provides the third option: a compatibilism of mystery, where God is 100% sovereign and man is 100% responsible, and both are true without

contradiction. It's like asking if light is a wave or a particle. Physics tells us it behaves as both. To insist it must be only one is to impose a false dilemma on the reality of the physical world.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **rationalism**, the belief that human reason is the ultimate measure of all truth. Both the hyper-Calvinist and the Pelagian are rationalists at heart. They cannot tolerate a paradox or a mystery that their logical systems cannot fully contain and explain. They approach the Bible as a philosophical textbook that must be logically consistent according to the rules of human reason. The biblical worldview, however, is one of revelation. It calls us to believe what God has revealed, even when those truths stretch the limits of our comprehension. It prioritizes faith in divine revelation over the supremacy of human reason.

The Will of Man and the Grace of God

Question 31. Does the Bible teach that the human will is completely bound and unable to respond to God's grace?

Answer 31. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Bible teaches that the unregenerate human will is in a state of bondage to sin, but it does not teach that it is completely bound and unable to respond to the initiative of God's grace. Scripture paints a picture of a will that is fallen, morally corrupt, and naturally inclined away from God. Left to itself, it "will not" come to Christ. However, the Bible also shows that God's grace, through the hearing of the Word and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, is a powerful, persuasive force that **enables a response**. Jesus's own words in John 5:40 are telling: "And ye **will not** come to me, that ye might have life." He does not say, "ye *cannot* come." The issue He identifies is one of volition, not of capacity. The universal commands to "choose," "repent," and "believe" would be a divine mockery if the will were utterly incapable of responding. The doctrine of "Total Inability" is a philosophical inference that takes the biblical teaching of man's radical depravity a step too far, turning a moral unwillingness into a metaphysical incapacity. The Bible's position is that the will is a captive that must be liberated, not a corpse that must be reanimated before it can hear a command. God's grace provides that liberation, enabling the will to make a genuine choice.

Scripture References: John 5:40, John 7:17, Revelation 22:17, Joshua 24:15, Deuteronomy 30:19, Romans 2:14-15, Acts 7:51

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** will be verses that speak of spiritual death, such as Ephesians 2:1 ("dead in trespasses and sins"), and the inability of the natural man to understand spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). The argument is that a dead man cannot respond. This, as previously discussed, is a faulty argument based on taking a metaphor too literally. The "dead" in Ephesians 2 are still "walking" and "fulfilling desires." The metaphor describes their legal and relational separation from God, not a state of paralysis. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 2:14 describes the state of the natural man *apart from the Spirit's work*. It does not deny that the Spirit can and does illuminate the unregenerate mind to understand the gospel. These verses describe the problem; God's drawing grace is the solution that enables the will to respond.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of the "bondage of the will" in the sense of total inability is a cornerstone of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. It was famously articulated by **Martin Luther** in his book *On the Bondage of the Will* (1525), written in response to Erasmus. While Luther is not a Calvinist, his strong Augustinian view on this point heavily influenced the Reformed tradition. **John Calvin** adopted and systematized this view, making it the foundation (the 'T' in TULIP) for the rest of his soteriology. This view is a defining difference between the Reformed tradition and the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which holds that God's "prevenient grace" restores to all people the freedom to respond to the gospel.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 6:44, Romans 3:11, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:1-3, Romans 8:7-8

Verses of Correction: John 5:40, Revelation 22:17, Acts 7:51, Matthew 23:37, John 12:32

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for total inability often commits the **Hasty Generalization** fallacy. It takes a few specific verses that describe the depth of human sinfulness and generalizes them into an absolute, metaphysical principle of total inability that is then applied to all of humanity in every circumstance. It ignores the vast body of evidence (the universal commands and invitations) that suggests a capacity for response. It's like seeing a few people who are seriously ill and concluding that the entire human race is incapable of walking. The diagnosis is too sweeping and ignores the evidence of those who, by the physician's help, are able to get up and walk.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views human nature through a monistic, deterministic lens**. This philosophical view sees the human being as a unified entity whose actions are determined by their fundamental nature. If the nature is "sinful," then all actions, including the will, must be "sinful" and incapable of choosing God. The Bible, however, presents a more complex picture of human nature, with a conscience that can respond to God's law and a spirit that can be convicted by the Holy Spirit. It is not a monolithic block of "sinfulness," but a complex battleground where the grace of God can and does engage the human will.

Question 32. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in drawing people to Christ (John 6:44), and is this drawing irresistible?

Answer 32. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The role of the Holy Spirit in drawing people to Christ is absolutely essential, initiatory, and powerful. Jesus Himself declared, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me **draw him**" (John 6:44). This divine "drawing" is the work of the Holy Spirit, who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). He opens hearts, illuminates minds to the truth of the gospel, and overcomes the spiritual blindness and bondage caused by sin. Without this divine initiative, no one would be saved. However, the Bible does not teach that this drawing is an irresistible, coercive force that cannot be refused. The very same Gospel of John that speaks of the Father's drawing also contains Jesus' lament, "ye will not come to me" (John 5:40). Stephen's final sermon culminates in the accusation, "Ye do always **resist the Holy Ghost**" (Acts 7:51). These are not descriptions of impossible acts. The drawing of the Spirit is a **powerful, persuasive, and enabling call**, not a

metaphysical compulsion. It is the divine persuasion that makes a willing response possible, not a divine force that makes an unwilling response inevitable.

Scripture References: John 6:44, John 12:32, John 16:7-11, Acts 7:51, Acts 16:14, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Hebrews 10:29

Anticipated Rebuttals: The main **rebuttal** focuses on the Greek word for "draw," *helkuo*, arguing that it implies a forcible dragging, as when a net is dragged to shore. While the word can have this meaning, it is not its only meaning. In John 12:32, Jesus says that when He is lifted up, He will "draw all men" to Himself. Since not all men are saved, this drawing cannot be irresistible. It speaks of the magnetic, moral attraction of the cross. The context must determine the meaning. To insist on the most forceful meaning in John 6:44 while ignoring the clear universal context of John 12:32 is inconsistent. The drawing is powerful enough to save anyone who yields to it, but not so powerful that it overrides the will of those who choose to resist it.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of Irresistible Grace is the 'I' in the TULIP acronym of **Calvinism** and is taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This doctrine is a logical necessity of the system: if man is totally unable and God has unconditionally elected some, then the grace applied to the elect must be irresistible to guarantee their salvation. This view, developed by **Augustine** and systematized by **John Calvin** (1536), stands in contrast to the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view of "prevenient grace," which is seen as a universal, enabling grace that can be accepted or rejected.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 6:37, John 6:44, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:30, Philippians 2:13

Verses of Correction: Acts 7:51, Matthew 23:37, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Proverbs 1:24-25, John 5:40

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for irresistible drawing often commits the **Cherry-Picking** fallacy. It focuses on John 6:44 and insists on the most forceful definition of the word "draw," while ignoring or downplaying other clear passages that explicitly speak of the Holy Spirit being resisted (Acts 7:51), God's grace being received in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1), and people being unwilling to come to Christ (Matthew 23:37). A balanced doctrine cannot be built by focusing on one verse to the exclusion of others. All the evidence must be considered and harmonized.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views divine influence in terms of physical force rather than moral persuasion**. This is a mechanistic worldview. It thinks of the soul as a physical object that must be moved by an external force. If the force is strong enough (irresistible), the object moves. The Bible, however, presents God's interaction with humanity in personal, relational, and moral terms. The Holy Spirit does not "drag" the soul like a magnet dragging a piece of iron. He "convinces," "testifies," "guides," and "teaches." He is a person who engages in moral persuasion, not an impersonal force that engages in metaphysical compulsion.

Question 33. How do the repeated invitations to "come," "ask," "seek," and "knock" in Scripture imply a capacity for human response?

Answer 33. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The repeated, earnest, and universal invitations of Scripture to "come," "ask," "seek," and "knock" are one of the most powerful, commonsense proofs that the human will is capable of responding to God's grace. These are not empty, rhetorical gestures. They are bona fide commands and offers from the God of the universe. The final, glorious invitation of the Bible sums up the spirit of them all: "And the Spirit and the bride say, **Come**. And let him that heareth say, **Come**. And let him that is athirst **come**. And **whosoever will**, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). The very structure of these commands implies a capacity in the hearer to respond. You do not command a corpse to come. You do not tell a stone to ask. The commands are addressed to living, moral agents who, by the enabling grace of God that accompanies the call, have the ability to make a choice. To argue that a person is utterly incapable of responding to these commands until after they have been secretly and irresistibly regenerated is to make God's Word a book of absurdities, where He commands the impossible and invites the incapable. The invitations are real because the capacity to respond, through grace, is real.

Scripture References: Matthew 7:7-8, Matthew 11:28, Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 55:1-3, John 7:37, Revelation 3:20, Revelation 22:17

Anticipated Rebuttals: The standard **rebuttal** is that these commands are only issued to demonstrate man's inability and thus show him his need for irresistible grace. In this view, the command "come" is not meant to be obeyed by the unregenerate, but to prove to them that they *cannot* come on their own. This turns the gracious invitations of the gospel into a cruel legal device designed to increase condemnation. It portrays a God who says, "Come to me for rest," with the secret intention of proving to the weary soul that it is incapable of taking a single step. This is a monstrous caricature of the God who says, "Come now, and let us reason together." The invitations are not a setup for failure; they are a sincere offer of life.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The view that these universal invitations are not genuine offers to all but serve only to highlight the inability of the non-elect is a necessary conclusion of the doctrine of Total Inability, as taught in **hyper-Calvinistic** circles (**Reformed, Presbyterian**). This view, which flows from the systems of **Augustine and Calvin**, must find a purpose for the universal calls that does not violate the particularity of election and grace. The "demonstration of inability" argument is the systematic solution. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees these invitations as the very vehicle of "prevenient grace," the divine influence that enables a response from all who hear.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 3:20 ("by the law is the knowledge of sin"), John 6:44

Verses of Correction: Revelation 22:17, Matthew 11:28, Isaiah 55:1, John 5:40, Matthew 7:7-8

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the invitations are only meant to prove inability is a form of the **Straw Man** fallacy. It misrepresents the purpose of a gospel invitation. A genuine invitation is meant to be accepted. The argument reconstructs it as something else entirely—a diagnostic tool. It attacks this reconstructed, ungracious purpose ("Why would God make a cruel, unattainable offer?") rather than dealing with the plain, gracious purpose stated in the text. It's like

arguing that a "Help Wanted" sign is not really an offer of employment, but just a cruel trick to remind the unemployed that they don't have the skills for the job.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's primary interaction with the unregenerate is legal rather than gracious**. This view sees every divine utterance to the unsaved through the lens of the law, which can only condemn. It fails to recognize that the gospel invitation is a different kind of speech act altogether. It is not law; it is grace. It is not a demand; it is an offer. It is not a command that highlights sin; it is a promise that offers forgiveness. To treat the sweet invitations of the gospel as if they were the harsh demands of Sinai is a profound category error, confusing the ministry of condemnation with the ministry of reconciliation.

Question 34. What does Jesus' lament over Jerusalem—"how often would I have gathered thy children together... and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37)—reveal about the resistibility of God's will?

Answer 34. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): Jesus' sorrowful lament over Jerusalem is one of the most poignant and powerful passages in all of Scripture, and it serves as a definitive statement on the resistibility of God's saving will. In this cry from the heart of God incarnate, two wills are placed in stark contrast. First, there is the divine will of Jesus: "how often **would I** have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." This is the expressed, sincere desire of God for the salvation and protection of His covenant people. It is a will of love, compassion, and grace. Second, there is the human will of the people: "**and ye would not!**" The reason for their desolation is not a secret, eternal decree of reprobation from the Father. The reason is stated plainly: their own rebellious, unwilling hearts. This passage reveals a God whose gracious intentions can be thwarted by human obstinacy. It demonstrates that His desire to save does not operate as an irresistible force. He stands with His arms open, but He will not force His children to come under His wings. This single verse is an insurmountable obstacle for any system that teaches that God's saving grace is always effectual and cannot be resisted.

Scripture References: Matthew 23:37, Luke 13:34, Acts 7:51, Proverbs 1:24-31, Isaiah 65:2, John 5:40

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is to appeal to the "two wills" of God. The argument is that Jesus is expressing a frustration of His "preceptive will" (what He commands and desires in one sense), but not His "decretive will" (what He has secretly and unchangeably decreed). In this view, God secretly decreed that Jerusalem would *not* be gathered, even while He openly expressed His desire that they *would* be gathered. This solution, while preserving the system, does so at a great cost: it portrays God as being divided against Himself, with a secret will that is the opposite of His revealed will. It makes His tears over Jerusalem seem disingenuous. The simpler, more biblically consistent reading is to take Jesus at His word: He genuinely wanted to save them, but they genuinely refused.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The "two wills" theory is a theological device used within **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)** to reconcile passages like this with the doctrine of irresistible grace. This distinction between the decretive and preceptive will was

developed by theologians following **John Calvin** to handle the clear biblical evidence of God's universal, benevolent desires. While the distinction can be useful in some contexts, its application here creates a significant moral and theological problem by suggesting a form of divine insincerity. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees this passage as a clear proof of resistible grace and the genuine freedom of the human will to reject God's love.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:19 ("Who hath resisted his will?"), Ephesians 1:11

Verses of Correction: Matthew 23:37, Acts 7:51, John 5:40, 2 Peter 3:9

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The "two wills" argument, when used to explain away God's sincerity, can be seen as a form of **Equivocation**. It uses the word "will" with two very different and seemingly contradictory meanings in the same context. It says God "wills" (desires) the salvation of all, but also "wills" (decrees) the damnation of some. By shifting the meaning of this key term, the argument can appear to resolve the contradiction, but it does so by making the term itself ambiguous. It's like saying, "I am going to the bank (to get money)," and then later saying, "I am going to the bank (of the river)." The word is the same, but the meaning is entirely different, and to confuse the two would be misleading.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's sovereignty must be expressed in a way that is free from any apparent frustration or limitation**. This is a philosophical ideal of impassibility, borrowed more from Greek philosophy (like Aristotle's "unmoved mover") than from the Hebrew Bible. The God of the Bible is deeply relational and is often portrayed as being grieved, vexed, and frustrated by the rebellion of His people. He is not a stoic, impassive deity. The lament over Jerusalem reveals the heart of a loving Father whose heart can be broken by the choices of His children. To explain this away with a philosophical device is to sacrifice the relational God of the Bible for a more logically tidy, but less biblical, philosophical construct.

Question 35. Is the faith that leads to salvation a gift from God that is irresistibly applied, or is it a human response to God's gracious initiative?

Answer 35. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Bible presents faith not as a choice between a divine gift and a human response, but as a **human response that is made possible by a divine gift**. It is a beautiful synergy, not a stark "either-or." Ephesians 2:8-9 is key: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." The "gift of God" in this passage refers to the entire package of salvation, which is initiated and accomplished by His grace. Faith is the channel, the open hand, through which this gift is received. The ability to have faith is itself a work of grace. As Romans 10:17 says, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." God provides the message, the Holy Spirit provides the conviction and illumination, and this gracious initiative enables the human will to respond in faith. However, the Bible consistently portrays the *act* of believing as a personal response and a command to be obeyed. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). The idea that faith is a gift that is irresistibly applied to a passive soul is not supported by the text. Grace enables, the Spirit draws, but the individual must believe.

Scripture References: Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 10:17, Acts 16:31, John 3:16, Romans 4:3-5, Hebrews 11:6, Galatians 5:6

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to isolate Ephesians 2:8 and argue that the pronoun "that" ("and *that* not of yourselves") refers directly and exclusively to "faith," thus proving faith itself is the gift. While grammatically possible, it is more likely in the context that "that" refers to the whole concept of salvation by grace through faith. Even if "faith" is the antecedent, it doesn't necessitate that the gift is irresistibly applied. God can give the gift of an opportunity to believe, or the ability to believe, without forcing the act of belief. Another **rebuttal** comes from John 6:65, "no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." This proves that the ability to come is a gift, which is not in dispute. It does not, however, prove that this gift is given only to a select few or that it operates irresistibly.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine that saving faith is a gift that is monergistically and irresistibly granted only to the elect is a central tenet of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. This view is a logical necessity of the doctrines of Total Inability and Unconditional Election. It was systematically defended by **John Calvin**, who argued that faith is not a condition for salvation but a part of the salvation package that is sovereignly bestowed upon the elect. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view that faith is a Spirit-enabled human response that is the condition for receiving the gift of salvation.

Verses of Apparent Support: Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 1:29, John 6:65, Acts 13:48

Verses of Correction: Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, John 3:16, John 20:31, Hebrews 4:2

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that "faith is a gift, therefore it must be irresistible" is a **Non Sequitur**. The conclusion does not logically follow from the premise. A gift can be offered without being irresistibly received. If I offer you the gift of a million dollars, it is still a gift, even if you refuse to accept it. The "gift" of faith can be understood as the gracious provision of sufficient evidence, the convicting work of the Spirit, and the enabling of the will, all of which make belief possible. It does not logically require that the final act of entrusting oneself to Christ is also performed by God on behalf of the person.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **fails to distinguish between the ability and the act**. This is a subtle but critical philosophical distinction. The Calvinistic view tends to conflate the two. It argues that because God gives the *ability* to believe (the gift), He must also perform the *act* of believing for us. The Bible, however, maintains a clear distinction. God's grace provides the ability, but He commands us to perform the act. It's like a physical therapist who works with a paralyzed patient, strengthening their muscles and enabling them to stand (the gift of ability). The therapist does not then perform the act of walking for the patient; he commands the patient to "take up your bed and walk" (the required act).

Question 36. If grace is irresistible, why does the Bible contain warnings against resisting the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51) and receiving the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1)?

Answer 36. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Bible's explicit and solemn warnings against resisting the Holy Spirit and receiving God's grace in vain serve as a direct refutation of the doctrine of irresistible grace. These passages are not directed at hypothetical situations or at people who were never genuinely offered grace. They are real warnings about real possibilities. When Stephen confronted the Sanhedrin, he was not accusing them of attempting the impossible; he was condemning them for a real and persistent sin: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye do always resist the Holy Ghost**: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). Similarly, Paul's heartfelt plea to the Corinthian believers, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye **receive not the grace of God in vain**" (2 Corinthians 6:1), would be utterly meaningless if saving grace were an irresistible force that could not be received "in vain." The very existence of these warnings in the divine architecture of Scripture proves that the grace of God is a powerful, persuasive offer that can be, and tragically often is, refused and squandered by the pride and rebellion of the human heart.

Scripture References: Acts 7:51, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Galatians 5:4, Hebrews 10:29, Hebrews 12:15, Proverbs 1:24-26, Isaiah 65:2, Matthew 23:37

Anticipated Rebuttals: The standard **rebuttal** is to posit two kinds of grace: "common grace," which is resistible and extended to all, and "saving grace" (or "effectual grace"), which is irresistible and extended only to the elect. In this framework, Stephen was only accusing the Pharisees of resisting common grace, not the irresistible saving grace they were never offered. This "two graces" theory, however, is a theological construct created to solve a problem within the system; it is not explicitly taught in Scripture. The Bible speaks of "the grace of God," and the context of these warnings is always salvific. Paul is writing to the church at Corinth about their salvation when he warns them not to receive grace in vain. To invent a different kind of grace to explain away a clear biblical statement is an act of systematic theology overriding exegesis.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of Irresistible Grace is the 'I' in the TULIP of **Calvinism** and is a central teaching in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This doctrine, which flows from the deterministic logic of **Augustine** and **John Calvin**, requires that any biblical passage speaking of resistance to God's grace must be reinterpreted. The "two graces" theory is the most common method for achieving this. This stands in stark contrast to the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which sees these passages as clear evidence that saving grace is, in fact, resistible.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 6:37, John 6:44, Romans 8:30

Verses of Correction: Acts 7:51, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Matthew 23:37, Hebrews 12:15, John 5:40

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The "two graces" argument is a classic example of the **Ad Hoc Rescue** fallacy. The original belief ("saving grace is irresistible") is threatened by clear counterevidence (Acts 7:51). To save the belief, a new, unsupported element is introduced: the existence of a different, resistible "common grace." This new element is created "for this" (ad hoc) specific purpose—to rescue the original theory from being falsified. It's an intellectually questionable move that protects a belief by inventing new categories that are not found in the original evidence. It's

like a scientist whose theory is disproven by an experiment, so he invents a new, undiscovered law of physics just to make his theory work.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's purposes must be understood in terms of efficiency rather than relationship**. The deterministic model requires a perfectly efficient system. If God intends to save someone, the means He uses must be 100% efficient and irresistible. Any "wasted" or "resisted" grace introduces inefficiency into the system. The Bible, however, portrays a God who operates in a relational, and sometimes seemingly "inefficient," way. He pleads, He warns, He sends prophets who are rejected, He offers a grace that is spurned. This is the messy reality of a real relationship with free moral agents, not the clean, efficient operation of a divine machine.

Question 37. What is the "effectual call," and is there a biblical basis for a special, internal call that is different from the general, external call of the Gospel?

Answer 37. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The concept of an "effectual call" as a special, internal, irresistible summons given only to the elect—distinct from the general, external call of the gospel given to all—is a **theological construct, not an explicit biblical doctrine**. It is a piece of systematic scaffolding erected to support the structure of Calvinism. The Bible speaks of one gospel call. This call is the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. This one call is inherently powerful and "effectual" in that it is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). The call's effect, however, is contingent on the response of the hearer. It becomes "effectual" *in the life* of the person who responds to it in faith. The idea of two different types of calls—one designed to be rejected by the non-elect and another designed to be irresistible to the elect—is not found in the text. It is an invention required by a system that cannot reconcile a universal call with a particular election. The Bible's model is simpler: one call goes out to all, and it is effectual for those who believe.

Scripture References: Romans 1:16, Romans 8:30, 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, 2 Thessalonians 2:14, Matthew 22:14, Hebrews 4:2

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary text used to support the effectual call is Romans 8:30, "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also **called**: and whom he called, them he also justified." It is argued that since all who are "called" in this verse are also "justified," this must be a special, effectual call that always results in salvation. This interpretation, however, ignores the nature of the "golden chain." Paul is speaking from God's eternal perspective, describing the logical and certain outcome *for those who are ultimately saved*. He is not describing the mechanics or the nature of the call itself as it is experienced in time. He is simply stating that for the elect, the call leads to justification. Another text is 1 Corinthians 1:24, which says Christ is the power and wisdom of God "unto them which are called." Again, this describes the *result* of the call in the life of believers, not a different *type* of call.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of the Effectual Call is a central and necessary component of **Calvinistic** soteriology, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. It was systematically developed by theologians following **John Calvin** to bridge the gap between the Bible's universal invitations and the system's doctrine of a limited, particular election. Without the

idea of a special, irresistible call for the elect, the system would collapse, as there would be no mechanism to guarantee that the elect would, in fact, come to faith. This theological device is a hallmark of the Reformed tradition.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 8:30, 1 Corinthians 1:24, John 6:45, Acts 13:48

Verses of Correction: Matthew 22:14 ("many are called, but few are chosen"), Hebrews 4:2 ("the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith"), Proverbs 1:24 ("I have called, and ye refused")

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for the effectual call commits the **Fallacy of Affirming the Consequent**. The logical form is: If a person receives the effectual call (P), then they will be justified (Q). This person is justified (Q). Therefore, they must have received the effectual call (P). The error is that it assumes the conclusion in the premise. It defines the "called" in Romans 8:30 as "the effectually called" and then uses the fact that they are justified to prove that the call was effectual. It's a circular argument that doesn't prove that a special type of call exists, only that for those who are saved, the call was, in fact, effective.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **causality must be uniform and mechanistic**. This philosophical bias requires that for a given cause (the call), the effect (salvation) must always be the same. Since the effect is not the same for everyone who hears the gospel, it concludes that there must be two different causes (two different types of calls). The Bible, however, operates on a relational and personal model of causality. In this model, a single cause (the one gospel call) can produce different effects based on the disposition of the recipient. The sower sows one type of seed, but it produces different results in four different types of soil.

Question 38. How does the concept of "hardening" the heart, as seen with Pharaoh and Israel, work in the Bible? Is it an active work of God or a consequence of human rebellion?

Answer 38. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The biblical concept of God "hardening" a heart is a solemn act of divine judgment, but it is not an act of God creating evil or unbelief in a neutral or innocent person. Rather, it is the **judicial consequence of persistent human rebellion**. The classic case study is Pharaoh. The book of Exodus uses two different phrases: "Pharaoh hardened his heart," and "the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart." This is not a contradiction. The process begins with Pharaoh's own prideful, defiant choice to harden his own heart against God's command. After this pattern of rebellion is established, God then acts judicially to confirm and solidify the hardness that Pharaoh himself has chosen. God's hardening is the act of giving a rebel over to his rebellion. It is the withdrawal of restraining grace, allowing the sin that is already present in the heart to become fully mature and set. The same principle is seen with Israel in the time of Isaiah and with the Gentile world in Romans 1. God gives people over to a "reprobate mind" *because* they first refuse to honor Him. The hardening is a reactive judgment, not a proactive creation of sin.

Scripture References: Exodus 4:21, Exodus 7:3, Exodus 7:13-14, Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:32, Exodus 9:12, Exodus 9:34, Deuteronomy 2:30, Joshua 11:20, 1 Samuel 6:6, Isaiah 6:9-10, John 12:40, Romans 1:24-28, Romans 9:18, Romans 11:7-8, 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to focus exclusively on the verses where it says "the LORD hardened" Pharaoh's heart, and to use Romans 9:18 ("whom he will he hardeneth") to argue that this is a purely sovereign, unconditional act of God, unrelated to the person's prior choices. This interpretation, however, can only be sustained by ignoring the parallel verses where Pharaoh is said to harden his own heart. A topical study requires that all the verses be harmonized. When harmonized, a clear pattern emerges: human rebellion precedes divine hardening. The argument from Romans 9 again lifts the verse out of its context, which is about God's right to use a self-hardened ruler like Pharaoh for His own redemptive purposes in history.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of hardening as a direct, unconditional, and sometimes proactive work of God is a necessary component of **hyper-Calvinism**. This view, flowing from the deterministic systems of **Augustine and Calvin**, sees the hardening of the reprobate as the flip side of the irresistible grace shown to the elect. Both are seen as expressions of God's meticulous, sovereign decree. This view is taught in some **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees hardening as a judicial act in response to foreseen or actual unbelief.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:17-18, Exodus 7:3, John 12:40, Isaiah 63:17

Verses of Correction: Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:32, 1 Samuel 6:6, Hebrews 3:8, Hebrews 3:13, Hebrews 4:7, Psalm 95:8

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for unconditional hardening often commits the **Suppressed Evidence** fallacy (a form of cherry-picking). It systematically emphasizes the verses that say "God hardened" while ignoring or minimizing the significance of the verses that say "Pharaoh hardened" his own heart. By presenting only half of the evidence, it creates a distorted picture that seems to support its conclusion. A full and honest examination of all the relevant texts, however, reveals a more complex and nuanced process that begins with human responsibility. It's like a lawyer telling the jury about the defendant's fingerprints on the weapon, but "forgetting" to mention the testimony of ten eyewitnesses who saw someone else commit the crime.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's sovereignty in terms of direct, unilateral causation**. This is a simplistic, almost mechanical view of how God works in the world. It assumes that for any event to be under God's control, He must be its direct and primary cause. The Bible, however, presents a God who works through a complex interplay of primary and secondary causes. He can work through the free choices, and even the sinful choices, of His creatures to accomplish His will. The hardening of Pharaoh is a perfect example of this complex agency, where both God and Pharaoh are said to be the actors. The philosophical error is to reduce this complex, personal interaction to a simple, unilateral, deterministic act.

Question 39. If a person cannot respond to God without irresistible grace, how can they be held accountable for their unbelief?

Answer 39. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The doctrine of human accountability, which is a cornerstone of biblical justice, is rendered incoherent by the premise of irresistible grace and total inability. The Bible consistently holds human beings responsible for their unbelief. Jesus did not rebuke the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida for their metaphysical inability to repent; He rebuked them because "they repented not" in the face of mighty works (Matthew 11:20-21). The condemnation, according to John 3:19, is not that men were created unable to see the light, but that "light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light**, because their deeds were evil." The reason for judgment is a moral one—a rebellious love for sin—not a constitutional one. Accountability requires the ability to respond. To condemn a person for failing to do something they were created incapable of doing, while withholding the grace that would enable them, is contrary to the very character of the God who is a "God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4). The Bible's teaching on accountability presupposes that God's universal, prevenient grace gives all people sufficient light and ability to be held justly responsible for their choice.

Scripture References: John 3:18-19, John 5:40, Matthew 11:20-24, Romans 1:18-21, Romans 2:1-8, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Hebrews 4:2

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that man's inability is itself a culpable, sinful state for which he is responsible, having inherited it from Adam. Therefore, God is just in condemning him for the fruits of that inability, including his unbelief. This argument, however, simply pushes the problem of justice back a step. It still results in a person being condemned for a condition they did not choose and cannot remedy on their own. Another **rebuttal** is to appeal to mystery, stating that we cannot understand how God can be just in this, but we must believe it. While there are many mysteries in the faith, we are not called to believe that God is a "mystery" in the sense that He contradicts His own revealed character of justice and fairness.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The tension between divine determinism and human accountability is a long-standing philosophical problem within **Calvinism**. While **Reformed and Presbyterian** theologians have developed complex philosophical arguments (often termed "compatibilism") to reconcile the two, the tension remains. The system, as developed by **Augustine and Calvin**, prioritizes the doctrine of God's meticulous sovereignty, and accountability is then defined in a way that is "compatible" with that premise, even if it strains the plain meaning of justice. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which maintains that genuine accountability requires genuine freedom of response, made possible by God's grace.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:19-21, Romans 3:19

Verses of Correction: John 3:19, Romans 2:5-6, Ezekiel 18:20, Deuteronomy 24:16, John 15:22

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that man is accountable for his inability often involves a **Category Error**. It confuses a state of being (a supposed metaphysical inability) with a moral action (a choice). Accountability, in any meaningful sense of the word, applies to actions and

choices. We hold people accountable for what they *do*, not for what they *are*. To hold someone accountable for a constitutional state they were born with is like holding a person with a genetic disease accountable for having that disease. The Bible, however, consistently holds people accountable for their *deeds* and their *unbelief*, which are presented as choices of a rebellious heart.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **redefines justice to fit a deterministic system**. In order to make determinism work, the definition of justice has to be changed. Instead of justice being about giving a person what they deserve based on their free choices, justice becomes merely the execution of God's sovereign will. In this framework, whatever God decrees is, by definition, "just." This is a philosophical move that makes God's justice seem arbitrary and tautological ("it is just because God decreed it"). The biblical view, however, is that God's decrees are just because they align with His eternal, unchanging, and righteous character.

Question 40. What is the relationship between God's sovereignty in salvation and man's responsibility to believe?

Answer 40. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in salvation is a divine paradox, a sacred tension that human logic cannot fully resolve but that Scripture holds in perfect harmony. The Bible is the architect of both pillars, and they stand together as the foundation of our faith. On one hand, God is absolutely sovereign. Salvation is "of the LORD"; it is "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9:16). He initiates, He draws, He gives life. Without His sovereign grace, no one would be saved. On the other hand, man is completely responsible. The command to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" is a genuine, binding command. The invitation to "whosoever will" is a sincere offer. The Bible does not present these as contradictory. The glorious truth is that **God's sovereignty does not cancel out man's responsibility; it establishes the very possibility of it**. He is so sovereign that He can create beings with genuine moral freedom and weave their free choices into His infallible plan. The attempt to build a logical system that elevates one of these truths by diminishing the other will always result in a distorted picture of God. We are called not to solve the paradox, but to stand in awe of it, working out our salvation with fear and trembling, precisely because it is God who is at work in us.

Scripture References: (Sovereignty) John 6:44, Romans 9:16, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 2:8-9, Jonah 2:9; (Responsibility) John 3:16, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, Joshua 24:15, Revelation 22:17; (Paradox) Philippians 2:12-13, Acts 2:23, Acts 4:27-28

Anticipated Rebuttals: The **rebuttal** from the hyper-Calvinist side is that this "paradox" is an intellectual compromise, a failure to follow the logic of sovereignty to its necessary conclusion of determinism. They argue that responsibility must be redefined to be "compatible" with determinism. The **rebuttal** from the Pelagian or open theist side is that a God who is truly sovereign in the Calvinistic sense cannot allow for genuine human freedom. Both sides make the same fundamental error: they assume that the relationship between the divine and human wills must be comprehensible to the finite human mind. They refuse to allow for a mystery that is rooted in the very nature of an infinite Creator interacting with His finite creation. The Bible simply asserts both truths and calls us to believe them.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This tension is the primary fault line in the debate between **Calvinism** and **Arminianism**. **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches, following **Augustine and Calvin**, resolve the tension in favor of meticulous sovereignty. **Methodist, Pentecostal, and many Baptist** churches, following **Jacobus Arminius** (c. 1609) and **John Wesley** (18th century), resolve it in favor of a freedom of the will enabled by grace. Both systems are attempts to logically systematize what the Bible holds in paradoxical tension. Perhaps the most biblically faithful position is to refuse to build a system around either pole, and to preach both truths with equal vigor as the Scripture does.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For Sovereignty alone) Romans 9:16-21, Ephesians 1:11; (For Responsibility alone) Joshua 24:15, Ezekiel 18:31-32

Verses of Correction: Philippians 2:12-13, Acts 2:23, Genesis 50:20

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The attempt to resolve this tension by choosing one side over the other is the quintessential **False Dilemma**. It presents the issue as a binary choice: either divine determinism is true or human freedom is true. It fails to allow for the possibility that both are true in a way that transcends human logic. This is the ultimate "either-or" fallacy in theology. It's like arguing about light: one side says it's a wave, the other says it's a particle. They bring evidence for their side and point out the contradictions in the other. The truth of quantum mechanics is that it is somehow both. The truth of theology is that God is somehow completely sovereign and man is somehow completely responsible.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **anthropocentrism**, the idea that human beings and human reason are the measure of all things. Both extremes in this debate are deeply rationalistic. They assume that the reality of God's interaction with the world must conform to the principles of human logic. If it seems like a contradiction to us, it must be a contradiction. The biblical worldview, however, is theocentric. It starts with God, who is infinite and transcendent. It assumes that there will be things about His nature and His ways that are "past finding out." It calls for intellectual humility, the willingness to say, "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us."

The Perseverance and Security of the Believer

Question 41. Does the Bible teach that once a person is saved, they are always saved, regardless of their subsequent actions?

Answer 41. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The popular slogan "once saved, always saved," understood as an unconditional guarantee of salvation regardless of a person's subsequent life, is a dangerous and unbiblical distortion of the doctrine of eternal security. The Bible does teach a profound security for the believer, but it is a security that is possessed by those who **abide in Christ and continue in the faith**. It is a conditional security. The Scriptures are filled with glorious promises of God's keeping power. Jesus said of His sheep, "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). However, these promises are balanced by equally solemn warnings about the dire consequences of departing from the faith. The writer to

the Hebrews warns believers not to have an "evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12). Jesus Himself taught that a branch "in me" that does not bear fruit will be taken away and cast into the fire (John 15:2, 6). The security of the believer is not like a vaccination that makes one immune to spiritual death regardless of their lifestyle. It is like the security of a mountain climber who is safe as long as he holds fast to the rope that is securely anchored to the rock. God's rope will never break, but the believer is commanded to hold on.

Scripture References: (Assurances) John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 Peter 1:5, Jude 1:24; (Warnings) John 15:6, Romans 11:22, 1 Corinthians 9:27, Galatians 5:4, Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 3:12-14, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-29, 2 Peter 2:20-22

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to claim that anyone who "falls away" was never truly saved in the first place. The go-to verse for this is 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." This verse, however, describes a specific historical situation and cannot be used as a universal rule to nullify all the other warnings in Scripture. The warnings in Hebrews, for example, are addressed to people who are described as having been "enlightened," having "tasted of the heavenly gift," and being "made partakers of the Holy Ghost." This is not the language of false profession. To argue that none of these people were ever truly saved is to do violence to the plain meaning of the text simply to protect a theological system. The Bible clearly allows for the possibility of genuine believers making a shipwreck of their faith.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of Unconditional Eternal Security, or "Once Saved, Always Saved," is a hallmark of **Calvinism** (as the 'P' in TULIP, Perseverance of the Saints) and is also widely taught in many **Free Grace and independent Baptist** churches. The doctrine became a central point of contention during the Reformation. While **Martin Luther** held to a form of conditional security, **John Calvin** (1536) argued that the salvation of the elect was unchangeable. This view was solidified in the **Canons of Dort** (1619) and became a staple of Reformed theology. It is one of the most significant dividing lines between Calvinistic and Arminian/Wesleyan traditions.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, 1 John 2:19, Philippians 1:6, Ephesians 1:13-14

Verses of Correction: Hebrews 6:4-6, 2 Peter 2:20-21, John 15:2, Romans 11:22, Galatians 5:4, 1 Timothy 4:1, Ezekiel 18:24

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that anyone who falls away was "never truly saved" is a classic **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The initial claim is, "No true believer can fall away." When a counterexample is presented from Scripture (like those described in Hebrews 6), the definition of "true believer" is retroactively changed to exclude the counterexample: "Well, they weren't a *true* believer." This makes the original claim unfalsifiable. No matter how much evidence is presented of believers falling away, the system is protected by simply redefining who counts as a "true believer." It's a circular argument that refuses to let the evidence challenge the presupposition.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views salvation as a one-time, transactional event rather than an ongoing, relational covenant.** The "once saved, always saved" model treats salvation like a legal transaction, like paying off a mortgage. Once the final payment is made, the house is yours forever, regardless of what you do afterward. The Bible, however, presents salvation in the context of a living, organic, covenantal relationship, like a marriage or a branch connected to a vine. These relationships require ongoing faithfulness and abiding to be maintained. They are not static, one-time transactions, but living, dynamic connections that can be severed through unfaithfulness.

Question 42. What are the biblical conditions for final salvation, as outlined in passages like Colossians 1:22-23 and Hebrews 3:14?

Answer 42. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Bible is explicit that while our initial justification is by faith alone, our final salvation is conditioned upon our perseverance in that faith. Passages like Colossians 1:22-23 and Hebrews 3:14 are not ambiguous. They are the clear architectural specifications for the Christian life. Paul tells the Colossians that Christ will present them holy and unblameable at the end, but he adds a crucial condition: **"if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel."** The word "if" is a divine hinge upon which our final salvation turns. Similarly, the writer to the Hebrews states, "For we are made partakers of Christ, **if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.**" These verses, and many others like them, establish that the faith that saves is a faith that endures. This is not a doctrine of salvation by works or by human effort. It is the doctrine that genuine, saving faith will, by the power of God's sustaining grace, persevere. Endurance is not the *cause* of our salvation, but it is the necessary *evidence* of our salvation. The promise of glory is for those who finish the race.

Scripture References: Colossians 1:21-23, Hebrews 3:6, Hebrews 3:12-14, Matthew 10:22, Matthew 24:13, John 8:31, John 15:4-6, Romans 11:22, 1 Corinthians 15:2, Galatians 6:9, 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 2:10

Anticipated Rebuttals: The common **rebuttal** is to argue that these conditional "if" clauses are not expressing a real possibility of failure for the true believer, but are simply describing the nature of true faith. The argument is that if a person *is* a true believer, they *will* continue. Therefore, the "if" is not a warning of a possible outcome, but a description of a certain one. This interpretation, however, drains the language of its natural force. A warning is only a real warning if the danger is real. If it is impossible for a true believer to fail to continue, then why are they so frequently and solemnly warned about that very possibility? It turns these earnest admonitions into a form of theological tautology: "You will be saved if you are saved." The plain sense of the text is that continuing in the faith is a real, ongoing responsibility for the believer.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The necessity of reinterpreting these clear conditional clauses is a burden carried by theological systems that teach unconditional eternal security, most notably **Calvinism** and **Free Grace** theology. The system of **John Calvin**, finalized in the **Canons of Dort** (1619), insists that the elect will infallibly persevere. Therefore, verses like Colossians 1:23 and Hebrews 3:14 must be understood not as warnings of a real danger, but as marks by which the elect can be identified. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which takes these

conditions at face value as genuine requirements for final salvation, emphasizing the cooperative relationship between God's sustaining grace and the believer's enduring faith.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 10:28, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 John 2:19

Verses of Correction: Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 3:14, Matthew 24:13, John 15:6, Romans 11:22

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the "if" clauses are descriptive, not prescriptive, commits the **Argument by Reinterpretation** fallacy. It avoids the plain meaning of the evidence by changing the meaning of the key terms. The word "if" is a conditional term. The argument reinterprets it to be a descriptive term. It fundamentally changes the function of the word to make it fit the system. It's like seeing a sign that says, "You will be paid IF you finish the job," and arguing that the sign doesn't mean payment is conditioned on finishing, but is simply describing the fact that all who are paid will have, by definition, finished the job. It twists a condition into a description.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the Christian life in terms of a static status rather than a dynamic journey**. The deterministic model sees salvation as a legal status that is conferred at a single point in time and is thereafter unchangeable. The Bible, however, more frequently uses the language of a journey, a race, a fight, a walk. A journey has a starting point and a destination, and it requires continual progress. A race must be finished. A fight must be fought to the end. These metaphors all imply a process that requires endurance. By replacing the dynamic metaphor of a journey with the static metaphor of a legal status, the system loses the biblical emphasis on perseverance and the reality of the conditions for finishing well.

Question 43. How do the numerous warnings against falling away, apostasy, and being "cut off" apply to genuine believers?

Answer 43. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The numerous, solemn, and often terrifying warnings against falling away, apostasy, and being "cut off" are addressed directly and unequivocally to **genuine believers**. To argue otherwise is to ignore the plain address of the epistles and the context of the warnings. These are not warnings to outsiders or to hypothetical "false professors." They are pastoral alarms sounded for the benefit of the saints. When the writer to the Hebrews warns, "Take heed, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12), he is writing to the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." The warnings in Hebrews 6 describe people who were "once enlightened," had "tasted of the heavenly gift," and were "made partakers of the Holy Ghost." This is the language of genuine Christian experience. Paul warns the grafted-in Gentile believers in Rome that they too can be "cut off." Peter warns of those who have "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," who then become entangled again and are overcome. These warnings are real because the danger is real. They are the guardrails on the narrow path, reminding us that our security is found in abiding in Christ, not in presuming upon a past experience.

Scripture References: Hebrews 3:12, Hebrews 6:4-8, Hebrews 10:26-31, 2 Peter 2:20-22, Romans 11:20-22, 1 Corinthians 10:1-12, Galatians 5:4, 1 Timothy 4:1

Anticipated Rebuttals: The standard **rebuttal** is the "hypothetical warning" theory. This argument claims that the warnings are real in their description of the danger, but hypothetical in their application to the elect. They are meant to be a means of grace to ensure that the elect *do* persevere, but they could never actually happen to a true believer. This makes God's warnings a form of psychological motivation that is not grounded in reality. It's like a parent warning a child, "Don't touch the stove, it's hot!" while knowing that there is an invisible force field that would prevent the child from ever actually touching it. The warning loses its integrity. Another **rebuttal** is the "false professor" argument, which claims these passages only describe people who looked like believers but never possessed true saving faith. This requires reinterpreting the very strong language of genuine spiritual experience (like "partakers of the Holy Ghost") to mean something less than what it plainly says.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The need to explain away these powerful warnings is a major theological project within **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian)** and **Free Grace** circles. The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, as formulated by **John Calvin** and the **Synod of Dort**, cannot allow for the possibility of a true believer apostatizing. Therefore, a complex hermeneutic is developed to argue that these warnings are either hypothetical or apply only to non-elect individuals within the covenant community. This contrasts sharply with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which has always held that these warnings are to be taken at face value as evidence of the real possibility of falling from grace.

Verses of Apparent Support: 1 John 2:19, John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39

Verses of Correction: Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-29, 2 Peter 2:20-21, Romans 11:22, 1 Corinthians 10:12

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The "hypothetical warning" argument is a form of **Special Pleading**. It creates a special category for biblical warnings that is unlike any other form of warning. In the real world, a warning is only meaningful if the danger is real. The argument creates a special rule for these specific texts, saying, "All other warnings in life are about real dangers, but these specific warnings in the Bible are about a danger that could never actually happen to the people being warned." This is an ad hoc rule created for the sole purpose of protecting a theological system from clear, contradictory evidence.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's primary purpose is to guarantee an outcome rather than to cultivate a relationship**. The deterministic model requires a system that guarantees the final salvation of the elect with 100% certainty. The warnings introduce an element of contingency and relational responsibility that is incompatible with this model. The biblical model, however, is deeply relational. A loving father warns his children of real dangers because he loves them and wants them to choose the path of life and safety. He does not issue hypothetical warnings to manipulate them into a predetermined outcome. The warnings are a real expression of God's pastoral heart for His people.

Question 44. What does it mean to "make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10) if salvation is already unconditionally guaranteed?

Answer 44. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Apostle Peter's command to "give diligence to **make your calling and election sure**" is a direct contradiction to the idea that salvation is an unconditionally guaranteed, static possession. If a believer's eternal destiny were already immutably fixed by a pre-temporal decree, there would be nothing to "make sure." The very language of the command implies that assurance is not something to be passively assumed, but something to be actively confirmed. How is it made sure? The context of the passage provides the clear answer. Peter instructs believers to diligently add to their faith a list of virtues: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. He then concludes, "For if ye do these things, **ye shall never fall.**" Assurance, therefore, is not found by introspectively trying to discern if one is on a secret list of the elect. It is found by looking at the fruit of a transformed life. The command to "make it sure" is a call to a life of active, diligent, fruit-bearing faith. It presupposes that a lack of diligence can lead to a state of uncertainty and the real danger of falling.

Scripture References: 2 Peter 1:5-11, Philippians 2:12, Hebrews 4:1, Hebrews 4:11, Hebrews 6:11-12, 2 Corinthians 13:5

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that "making it sure" does not mean making it a reality, but simply confirming it or proving it to oneself and others. The argument is that the election is already sure in God's mind, and our diligence simply provides us with the subjective assurance of that fact. While it is true that a holy life brings subjective assurance, this interpretation weakens the force of the command. Peter links this diligence directly to the promise that "ye shall never fall." This implies that the diligence is instrumental in the perseverance itself, not just in our awareness of it. It is not just about feeling sure; it is about *being* sure by continuing in the path of faith and obedience.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, as taught in **Calvinistic churches (Reformed and Presbyterian)**, requires this verse to be interpreted in a purely subjective sense. Since the elect will infallibly persevere, the command cannot be about securing a future that is already guaranteed. It must be about gaining personal, psychological assurance. This interpretation was central to the Puritan tradition, which often led to an unhealthy and debilitating level of introspection as believers searched their souls for the "marks" of election. The **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, in contrast, sees this verse as a straightforward call to the real and necessary work of perseverance, through grace, in order to secure one's final salvation.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 8:30, Philippians 1:6, 2 Timothy 1:12

Verses of Correction: 2 Peter 1:10, Philippians 2:12, Hebrews 4:1, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 2 Corinthians 13:5

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that this verse is only about subjective assurance commits the **Fallacy of Exclusion** (a form of suppressed evidence). It focuses on the subjective aspect of assurance while excluding the objective aspect of perseverance that is clearly linked in

the text ("if ye do these things, ye shall never fall"). It presents an incomplete picture of the passage's meaning. It's like reading a doctor's prescription that says, "Take this medicine daily to maintain your health and feel well," and then arguing that the medicine has nothing to do with actually *maintaining* health, but only with *feeling* well.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **draws a sharp distinction between objective reality and subjective experience**. This is a modern philosophical bias. The Bible, particularly in its wisdom literature and pastoral epistles, tends to see these as deeply integrated. What you *do* directly affects who you *are* and how you *feel*. The command to "make your calling sure" is not just about changing your perception; it is about continuing in a course of action that solidifies the reality. The objective reality of our salvation is maintained through the subjective and active experience of diligent faith, and from that flows the feeling of assurance.

Question 45. Who are the "overcomers" in the book of Revelation, and what does their struggle imply about the Christian life?

Answer 45. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The "overcomers" in the book of Revelation are the true, persevering saints who maintain their faith in Jesus and their faithful witness to the end, in the midst of a hostile and seductive world. The promises to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 are all specifically and exclusively directed to "him that **overcometh**." These are the ones who will eat of the tree of life, receive the crown of life, be clothed in white raiment, and whose names will not be blotted out of the book of life. The very concept of "overcoming" implies that the Christian life is a **real and arduous struggle**, not a passive state of guaranteed security. It is a battle, a race, a fight. There is a real enemy to be overcome (Satan, the "accuser of our brethren"), a real world system to be overcome ("Babylon the great"), and a real internal battle with the flesh to be won. The existence of a special category of "overcomers" who receive these glorious promises implies the existence of those who do not overcome, who give in to temptation, who compromise with the world, and who ultimately fall away. The Christian life is not a spectator sport; it is a call to be a victorious soldier in the army of God.

Scripture References: Revelation 2:7, Revelation 2:11, Revelation 2:17, Revelation 2:26, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 3:12, Revelation 3:21, Revelation 12:11, Revelation 15:2, Revelation 21:7, 1 John 5:4-5

Anticipated Rebuttals: The common **rebuttal** is that all "true believers" are, by definition, overcomers. In this view, "overcoming" is not a description of a struggle that some might lose, but simply a synonym for "believer." This interpretation, however, flattens the text and removes the urgency from the promises. If every believer is automatically an overcomer, why are the promises framed as a special reward for those who achieve this status? It turns a powerful incentive into a simple description. The language of Revelation is clearly one of contrast and struggle. The promise is not to everyone in the church at Sardis, but specifically to the "few names... which have not defiled their garments." The call to overcome is a call to a victorious faith, not a description of an automatic status.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The reinterpretation of "overcomer" as a synonym for "every true believer" is a theological necessity for systems that teach unconditional eternal security, such as **Calvinism** and **Free Grace** theology. The system cannot allow for a distinction between believers who persevere and those who do not. Therefore, the category of "overcomer" must be redefined to include all the elect. This view, which became standard in **Reformed** theology after **Calvin**, contrasts with the view of many early church writers and later **Anabaptist** and **Arminian** traditions, who saw the call to overcome as a real exhortation to perseverance in the face of the real possibility of failure.

Verses of Apparent Support: 1 John 5:4 ("whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world"), John 16:33

Verses of Correction: Revelation 2:7 (The promise is conditional: "To him that overcometh..."), Revelation 3:4-5 (A "few names" in Sardis had not defiled their garments, and the promise of not being blotted out is for the overcomer), Revelation 21:7-8 (Contrasts the overcomer with the "fearful, and unbelieving")

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that all true believers are automatically overcomers commits the **Tautology** fallacy (a form of circular reasoning). A tautology is a statement that is true by definition. The argument defines a "true believer" as "one who overcomes," and then concludes that all true believers overcome. This tells us nothing new. It is a circular definition that avoids the real question: what does it mean to overcome, and is it possible for a believer to fail to do so? It's like saying, "All winning teams are teams that score more points." It's true by definition, but it doesn't explain how a team actually wins or if it's possible for them to lose.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **seeks to eliminate all risk and struggle from the doctrine of salvation**. This is a philosophical desire for absolute certainty and security. It creates a "safe" theological system where the outcome is guaranteed and there is no real danger. The Bible, however, presents a worldview that is filled with real risk, real struggle, and real calls to courageous, persevering faith. It is a story of warfare, not of quiet repose. The doctrine of the overcomer is a call to arms, an exhortation to fight the good fight. To redefine it as an automatic status is to replace the biblical narrative of spiritual warfare with a philosophical ideal of static security.

Question 46. How does the parable of the sower (Matthew 13) illustrate the different responses to the Gospel and the possibility of falling away?

Answer 46. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The parable of the sower is Jesus' own masterclass on the different responses to the gospel, and it stands as a powerful, undeniable illustration of the possibility of falling away. Of the four types of soil that receive the good seed of the Word, three fail to produce lasting fruit. The stony ground represents those who hear the word and "anon **with joy receiveth it**." This is a description of a genuine, initial conversion experience. Yet, because they have no root in themselves, "when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is **offended**," and falls away. The thorny ground represents those who also hear the word, but "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, **choke**

the word, and he becometh unfruitful." These are not pictures of people who were never really interested. They are pictures of promising beginnings that end in spiritual failure. The parable teaches that a positive initial response to the gospel is not a guarantee of final salvation. The only response that is ultimately vindicated is that of the good ground, which hears the word, understands it, and "beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." The parable is a solemn warning that the path of discipleship is fraught with dangers that can cause a genuine start to end in ruin.

Scripture References: Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15, Hebrews 6:4-8, 2 Peter 2:20-22

Anticipated Rebuttals: The standard **rebuttal** is to argue that the stony and thorny ground hearers were never "truly" saved. They had a false or temporary faith, but were not among the elect. This interpretation is forced upon the text by the theological system. The parable itself describes them as "receiving" the word, even with joy. It does not label them as hypocrites from the outset. Their failure is not in their initial reception, but in their lack of endurance and their succumbing to the pressures of the world and persecution. To say they were never genuine is to impose a category ("the truly regenerate") that the parable itself does not use. The parable's focus is on the observable progress of the seed, and it clearly shows that some seed that sprouts can, in fact, wither and die.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The need to interpret the stony and thorny ground as representing "false professors" is a requirement for any system that teaches unconditional eternal security, particularly **Calvinism** and **Free Grace** theology. The system, as laid out by **John Calvin** and his successors, cannot accommodate the idea of a genuine believer falling away. Therefore, the parable must be interpreted in a way that protects this core tenet. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees the parable as a straightforward illustration of the different ways a person can respond to prevenient grace, including the real possibility of apostasy after an initial acceptance.

Verses of Apparent Support: 1 John 2:19, John 10:28-29

Verses of Correction: Matthew 13:20-22, Luke 8:13 ("which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away"), Hebrews 6:4-6, 2 Peter 2:20

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the failed soils represent those who were never truly saved commits the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy. The initial, observable evidence is that they "received" the word. When this promising start fails, the goalpost for what constitutes a "real" start is moved. The new standard becomes, "Well, they didn't persevere, so their initial reception wasn't real." This retroactively changes the criteria for success to exclude all failures. It's like saying, "All the runners in this race are guaranteed to finish," and when a runner drops out, you say, "Well, he was never a *real* runner in this race." The definition is changed to protect the initial, faulty premise.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views conversion as a simple, one-time event rather than the beginning of a dynamic process**. This is a form of spiritual reductionism. It reduces the complex, organic process of growth, struggle, and perseverance described in the Bible to a single,

instantaneous, metaphysical transaction. The parable of the sower, however, is entirely about process. It is about what happens to the seed *after* it is sown. It is a story of growth, of roots, of choking thorns, and of fruit. To ignore the process and focus only on a supposed, invisible, initial transaction is to miss the entire point of the parable.

Question 47. What is the nature of the "fruit" that believers are expected to bear, and what happens to branches that do not bear fruit (John 15)?

Answer 47. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The "fruit" that believers are expected to bear is the tangible, visible evidence of a life that is vitally connected to Christ, the true vine. This fruit is multifaceted. It includes the development of Christ-like character, as described in the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23): love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. It also includes righteous conduct and good works, which glorify the Father. Jesus' discourse on the vine and the branches in John 15, however, contains one of the most sobering warnings in all of Scripture. He states, "Every branch **in me** that beareth not fruit he **taketh away**." This is not a warning to those outside the vine, but to the branches that are "in me"—a clear reference to believers, to disciples. He goes on to say that such a fruitless branch "is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (v. 6). This passage teaches with unmistakable clarity that a genuine connection to Christ can be severed if it does not result in a life of fruitfulness. It presents a conditional security that is contingent on abiding in the vine.

Scripture References: John 15:1-8, Matthew 3:10, Matthew 7:16-20, Luke 13:6-9, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 1:11

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that the branches that are "taken away" were never truly connected to the vine in a saving way. They were only outwardly or professionally attached, but not vitally united to Christ. This interpretation, however, struggles with the plain language of the text. Jesus says the branch is "in me." He does not qualify this with "outwardly" or "professedly." He is speaking to His disciples, warning them about the necessity of abiding. To say that a branch can be "in Christ" but not truly saved is to create a theological category that is not found in the text itself. It is an explanation designed to rescue the doctrine of unconditional security from a clear and powerful counterexample.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The need to reinterpret "in me" to mean something less than a saving relationship is a theological necessity for **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints cannot allow for a true branch "in Christ" to be cut off and burned. Therefore, the passage must be interpreted as referring to false disciples who were only part of the visible covenant community. This view, developed by **John Calvin** and his followers, is required to protect the system. In contrast, the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition has consistently pointed to John 15 as a primary proof text for the doctrine of conditional security and the real possibility of apostasy for a genuine believer.

Verses of Apparent Support: 1 John 2:19, John 6:37, Romans 8:38-39

Verses of Correction: John 15:2, John 15:6, Romans 11:22, Hebrews 6:4-8

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the fruitless branches were never truly "in Christ" commits the **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The initial premise is, "No true branch in Christ can be taken away and burned." When the evidence of John 15:2-6 is presented, which clearly shows branches "in me" being taken away and burned, the definition is changed: "Ah, but those were not *truly* in Christ in a saving way." This fallacy makes the original premise unfalsifiable by continually modifying the definition of the subject ("true branch") to exclude any and all counterexamples. It's a circular argument that refuses to deal with the text as it stands.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the relationship with Christ in static, positional terms rather than dynamic, organic terms**. The system sees being "in Christ" as a fixed, legal position that, once obtained, can never be altered. The metaphor Jesus chooses, however, is deliberately organic and dynamic. A branch is a living thing. Its connection to the vine is a living connection that requires a continual flow of life and sustenance ("abiding"). An organic relationship can be severed. A living branch can wither and die. By replacing Jesus' organic metaphor with a static, philosophical concept of "position," the system strips the warning of its power and its plain meaning.

Question 48. How does the teaching of Ezekiel 18 and 33, where a righteous man can turn from his righteousness and die in his sin, inform the doctrine of perseverance?

Answer 48. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The teaching of God through the prophet Ezekiel in chapters 18 and 33 provides a foundational Old Testament framework for understanding the doctrine of perseverance, and it stands in stark opposition to any notion of unconditional security. The principle of **individual and final accountability** is laid out with judicial clarity. God declares, "But when the **righteous turneth away from his righteousness**, and committeth iniquity... in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die" (Ezekiel 18:24). And conversely, "if the wicked turn from his sin... he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezekiel 33:14-15). This passage establishes that a person's eternal state is determined by their condition at the end of their life, not by a past period of righteousness. The righteous man's past good deeds "shall not be mentioned" if he turns to wickedness. This directly informs the New Testament warnings about perseverance. It shows that the principle of apostasy—that a person in a right relationship with God can turn away and be lost—is not a new concept, but is rooted in God's unchanging character of justice. It demonstrates that perseverance is not an automatic guarantee, but a continuous walk of faith and obedience.

Scripture References: Ezekiel 18:20-28, Ezekiel 33:12-20, Ezekiel 3:20-21, 2 Peter 2:20-21, Hebrews 10:38

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that this is an Old Covenant principle of works-righteousness and does not apply to the New Covenant of grace. This argument attempts to create a radical disjunction between the character of God in the Old and New Testaments. But the principles of God's justice are eternal. While the basis of our righteousness has changed (from works of the law to faith in Christ), the necessity of continuing in that righteousness has not. The New Testament is filled with echoes of Ezekiel's warning. 2 Peter 2:21 speaks of those who have known the way of righteousness and then turn from it, for whom "it had been better for them not

to have known the way." Hebrews 10:38 quotes the Old Testament: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." The principle is the same: drawing back from a state of righteousness leads to condemnation.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The need to relegate Ezekiel's teaching to a bygone "dispensation of works" is a necessity for systems that teach unconditional eternal security, such as **Calvinism** and **Free Grace** theology. The system of **John Calvin**, finalized at the **Synod of Dort**, insists that a saint will infallibly persevere. Therefore, a clear Old Testament passage teaching that a righteous man can fall away and perish must be quarantined and prevented from informing New Testament doctrine. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which sees a beautiful continuity in God's character and justice, and views Ezekiel 18 and 33 as providing the foundational grammar for understanding the New Testament's many warnings about apostasy.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 8:1 ("no condemnation"), Romans 11:29 ("gifts and calling of God are without repentance")

Verses of Correction: Ezekiel 18:24, Ezekiel 33:13, Ezekiel 33:18, Hebrews 10:26-27, 2 Peter 2:20-21

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that Ezekiel's warnings are "Old Covenant only" commits the **Genetic Fallacy**. This fallacy dismisses an idea based on its origin rather than its content. The argument is, "This teaching comes from the Old Covenant, therefore it is not relevant to us." This ignores the fact that the principles of God's character, justice, and holiness are timeless and are revealed throughout the entire Bible. While the administrative details of the covenants may change, the nature of the God behind the covenants does not. It's like dismissing the principle "Thou shalt not murder" because it originated in the Old Covenant. The principle is eternally valid because it reflects the character of God.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **radical dispensationalism**, which creates an artificial and unbiblical wall between the Old and New Testaments. This philosophical approach to Scripture chops the Bible into distinct, almost unrelated epochs, with different rules for salvation and different expressions of God's character. The Bible, however, presents itself as a unified, progressive revelation of a single redemptive plan, centered on a single God whose character is immutable. The principles of His justice in Ezekiel are not contradicted in the New Testament; they are fulfilled and deepened in the context of the grace of Christ.

Question 49. What is the "sin unto death" mentioned in 1 John 5:16, and does it have implications for the security of the believer?

Answer 49. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The "sin unto death" described by the Apostle John is a state of willful, high-handed, and unrepentant sin committed by a person who was once a brother in Christ. John makes a distinction between "a sin which is not unto death," for which believers should pray for their erring brother's restoration, and "a sin unto death," for which he says, "I do not say that he shall pray for it." While the specific sin is not defined, the context suggests it is a deliberate and final act of apostasy, a turning away from the truth so complete that

repentance is no longer possible (similar to the warning in Hebrews 6). The implications for the security of the believer are profound and sobering. The very existence of a "sin unto death" that can be committed by a "brother" proves that the believer's security is **not unconditional**. It demonstrates that it is possible for a person who has been part of the fellowship of believers to sin to such a degree that they forfeit their salvation and cross a point of no return. It is a solemn warning against presuming upon the grace of God and serves as a powerful refutation of any doctrine that teaches a believer is eternally secure regardless of their actions.

Scripture References: 1 John 5:16-17, Hebrews 6:4-8, Hebrews 10:26-29, Numbers 15:30-31, Matthew 12:31-32

Anticipated Rebuttals: One common **rebuttal** is to argue that the "sin unto death" refers only to physical death, not the loss of eternal salvation. The argument is that God may punish a believer's persistent sin by taking their physical life, but their soul remains saved. While God can and does discipline His children, sometimes severely, this interpretation seems to downplay the gravity of John's language and the parallel warnings in Hebrews, which clearly speak of eternal consequences. Another **rebuttal** is to claim that the person who commits this sin was never a "true" brother to begin with. This is the standard "No True Scotsman" argument, which redefines the subject to protect the theory. John, however, calls him a "brother," and the warning is given in the context of the life of the church.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, a cornerstone of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**, is directly challenged by this passage. The system developed by **John Calvin** and his successors cannot allow for a true believer to commit a sin that leads to the loss of salvation. Therefore, commentators from this tradition must interpret the "sin unto death" as either referring to physical death or as a sin committed by a false professor. **John Wesley**, on the other hand, in the 18th century, saw this passage as clear evidence for his doctrine of conditional security, arguing that it was a plain warning that a true Christian could "make shipwreck of the faith" and be eternally lost.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 10:28, Romans 8:38-39, 1 Corinthians 5:5

Verses of Correction: 1 John 5:16, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-27, 2 Peter 2:20-21

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the "sin unto death" refers only to physical death for a believer is an example of an **Appeal to a Lesser Consequence**. It attempts to soften the force of a clear warning by reducing the severity of the stated outcome. The context of 1 John is about the contrast between eternal life and death. To suddenly insert the idea of mere physical death into this context is to change the terms of the discussion. It's like a judge warning a traitor that his crime is "punishable by removal from the country," and then arguing that this only means he'll be sent on a short vacation, not permanently exiled. The interpretation minimizes the gravity of the warning to make it less threatening to a preconceived belief.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **salvation is an indestructible, metaphysical substance rather than a destructible, relational state**. The system views salvation as a "thing" that is given to a

person, an object that cannot be lost or broken. The Bible, however, presents salvation as a state of being in a right relationship with God through Christ. Relationships can be broken. Covenants can be violated. Life can be forfeited. The "sin unto death" is the act that definitively severs that life-giving relationship. The philosophical error is to reify salvation, turning it from a living connection into an unbreakable object, which makes the idea of a "sin unto death" a logical impossibility within the system.

Question 50. How do we reconcile the promises of God's keeping power (John 10:28-29) with the warnings against apostasy?

Answer 50. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The glorious promises of God's keeping power and the solemn warnings against apostasy are not contradictory; they are two sides of the same coin of conditional security. They are reconciled by understanding that God's power **keeps the believer who is abiding in faith**. The promise in John 10:28-29 is magnificent: "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." But to whom is this promise made? Jesus specifies in the preceding verse: "**My sheep hear my voice**, and I know them, and **they follow me**." The promise is for the obedient, following sheep. The warnings against apostasy, found throughout the New Testament, are addressed to those same sheep, cautioning them about the real danger of ceasing to follow, of developing an "evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12). There is no contradiction here. God's hand is omnipotent to hold any who desire to be held, but He will not hold by force a sheep that is determined to leap from the fold. The promises are the assurance of God's faithfulness to the covenant; the warnings are the reminder of our responsibility within that covenant. Our security is in Christ, and we are kept secure as we, by His grace, keep ourselves in Him.

Scripture References: (Promises) John 10:27-29, Romans 8:35-39, 1 Peter 1:5, Jude 1:24; (Warnings) Hebrews 3:12-14, Hebrews 6:4-6, John 15:6, Romans 11:22; (Reconciliation) Jude 1:21 ("Keep yourselves in the love of God")

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to claim that the warnings are merely the means God uses to keep the elect from apostatizing. In this view, the warnings are real, but they will always be effective for the true elect, so the possibility of a true elect person finally falling away is zero. This makes the warnings a form of divine psychology rather than a statement about a real possibility. It also fails to account for the fact that the Bible records instances of people who seem to meet every criterion of a believer and yet fall away (like those in Hebrews 6). The simpler explanation is that the promises apply to those who heed the warnings, and the warnings apply to those who begin to neglect the promises.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The need to see the warnings as hypothetical or as merely a means to an inevitable end is a requirement of **Calvinistic** theology. The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, as articulated by **John Calvin** and the **Synod of Dort**, does not allow for the real possibility of apostasy for the elect. Therefore, the relationship between the promises and warnings must be framed in a way that eliminates any genuine contingency. The **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, articulated by figures like **Jacobus Arminius** (c. 1609) and **John Wesley** (18th century), reconciles the passages by affirming that the promises are for the believing and abiding, and the warnings are for those who cease to believe and abide, thus upholding a conditional security.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 John 2:19

Verses of Correction: Hebrews 3:12-14, Romans 11:22, John 15:6, Colossians 1:23, Jude 1:21

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the warnings are just the "means" to guarantee an already certain outcome can be seen as a form of the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy. The initial goalpost is the clear meaning of a warning (a statement about a real, avoidable danger). When it's shown that this contradicts the system, the goalpost is moved. The new definition of a warning becomes "a psychological tool God uses to produce a predetermined result." The very nature of what a "warning" is has been changed to protect the theological system. It's an arbitrary redefinition to avoid the force of the evidence.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the relationship between God and the believer in terms of a unilateral monologue rather than a bilateral dialogue**. The deterministic model sees God as the only true actor. His promises are declarations of what He will do, and His warnings are simply part of the mechanism by which He does it. The human being is the passive recipient. The Bible, however, presents a dialogical relationship. God makes promises, and we are called to trust them. God issues warnings, and we are called to heed them. Our response is a real and meaningful part of the ongoing relationship. The error is to reduce this dynamic, two-way covenantal dialogue to a one-way, deterministic divine monologue.

The Logical and Moral Implications of Calvinism

Question 51. If God has unconditionally predestined some to salvation and others to damnation, can He be considered the author of sin?

Answer 51. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): If one builds a theological structure upon the premise that God has unconditionally and meticulously predestined "whatsoever comes to pass," including every thought, choice, and action of every person, then the conclusion that He is the ultimate author of sin becomes the unavoidable, albeit horrifying, cornerstone of that very structure. Though proponents of such a system may construct elaborate philosophical firewalls to protect God's character, the raw logic is inescapable. If God decreed the fall of Adam, and decreed every subsequent sinful act that followed, then He is not a passive permitter of sin, but its ultimate, primary cause. The sinner becomes merely the secondary cause, the instrument through which the divine decree is executed. Is the hammer responsible for the blow, or the carpenter who swings it? The Bible, however, presents a radically different architect. It reveals a God who is of "purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Habakkuk 1:13). It declares, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13). The scriptural testimony is that God hates sin, is separate from sin, and judges sin. To make Him its author is to **malign His holy character** and to contradict the very foundation of biblical morality. The Bible places the origin and responsibility of sin squarely on the free, rebellious choices of His creatures, both angelic and human.

Scripture References: James 1:13-15, 1 John 1:5, Habakkuk 1:13, Deuteronomy 32:4, Psalm 5:4, Genesis 1:31, Genesis 50:20, Acts 2:23

Anticipated Rebuttals: The most common **rebuttal** is the appeal to "secondary causes" or "concurrence." This argument posits that God decrees the sinful act, but the creature is the one who carries it out with a sinful motive, and is therefore responsible. This is a philosophical distinction without a real difference. If God's decree is the ultimate, determining cause that makes the sinful choice inevitable, then He is still the ultimate author of the act. It is like a man programming a robot to commit a crime; the robot is the secondary cause, but the programmer is the responsible author. Another **rebuttal** is to appeal to mystery, claiming we cannot understand how God can ordain sin without being culpable for it. While God's ways are higher than our ways, we are not called to believe in a mystery that requires us to affirm a logical contradiction or to malign the revealed character of God as perfectly holy.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This profound theological problem is inherent in **hyper-Calvinism**, the most rigid form of the theology taught in some **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. While **John Calvin** himself labored to avoid making God the author of sin, his system of meticulous, universal divine decrees, as articulated in his *Institutes* (1536), logically leads to this conclusion. His successors, like **Theodore Beza**, solidified this deterministic framework. This stands in stark contrast to the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which fiercely protects God's holiness by insisting that His sovereignty does not extend to the causation of sin, but rather to His permission of the free choices of His creatures.

Verses of Apparent Support: Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6, Lamentations 3:38, Proverbs 16:4, Romans 9:18-21, Acts 4:27-28

Verses of Correction: James 1:13, 1 John 1:5, Habakkuk 1:13, Psalm 92:15, Deuteronomy 32:4, 1 Corinthians 14:33

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that God decrees sin but is not its author commits the **Fallacy of Distinction Without a Difference**. It creates a semantic distinction ("primary cause" vs. "secondary cause") that has no practical difference in assigning ultimate responsibility. If the primary cause makes the secondary cause inevitable, the primary cause is the author of the final result. It's like a mob boss ordering a hit on someone. The hitman is the secondary cause who pulls the trigger, but the mob boss is the author of the murder. To argue otherwise is to play a word game that obscures the reality of moral responsibility.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **hard determinism**. This philosophical position holds that every event is necessitated by antecedent events and conditions together with the laws of nature. When applied to theology, God's decree becomes the ultimate antecedent condition that necessitates all subsequent events, including human choices. This reduces human beings to complex cogs in a cosmic machine, stripping them of genuine moral agency. The Bible, in contrast, operates on a framework of soft determinism or libertarian freedom, where God's sovereignty and human agency are held in a compatible, albeit mysterious, relationship.

Question 52. How does the doctrine of unconditional reprobation affect our understanding of God's justice and fairness?

Answer 52. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The doctrine of unconditional reprobation—the belief that God, before the foundation of the world, unconditionally decreed to pass over the majority of humanity and ordain them to eternal damnation for His own glory—is a grotesque caricature of biblical justice. It presents a vision of God that is more akin to a cruel, arbitrary tyrant than the righteous Judge of all the earth. The Bible's foundation for justice is righteousness, impartiality, and equity. God's judgment is never arbitrary; it is always "according to truth" and "according to their works." The doctrine of reprobation, however, posits a judgment that is predetermined without any regard to the individual's choices or deeds. It means God creates beings with the express purpose of condemning them for being the very thing He decreed them to be. How can it be just to condemn a person for a fate that was sealed before they ever drew a breath? It turns the final judgment into a **solemn farce**, a mere public execution of a secret, pre-written sentence. The God of the Bible, however, is the one who pleads with the wicked to turn and live, who takes no pleasure in their death, and whose justice is so perfect that on the final day, "every mouth may be stopped" (Romans 3:19), not by a display of raw power, but by the undeniable righteousness of His verdict.

Scripture References: Genesis 18:25, Deuteronomy 32:4, Psalm 9:8, Psalm 96:13, Acts 17:31, Romans 2:2-6, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9, 1 Peter 1:17, Revelation 20:12-13

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is the appeal to God's absolute sovereignty, particularly as framed in Romans 9:20-21: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" This is used to argue that God, as Creator, has the right to do whatever He pleases with His creation, and it is not for us to question His justice. This argument, however, rips the potter analogy from its Old Testament context (Jeremiah 18), where the potter's freedom to reshape the clay is conditioned on the clay's response. More importantly, it assumes that God's sovereignty is His only attribute. The Bible reveals a God whose sovereignty always acts in perfect harmony with His justice, goodness, and love. He is not a potter who creates vessels simply to enjoy the act of smashing them.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of Reprobation (sometimes called "double predestination") is the dark corollary to Unconditional Election in **high-Calvinism**. While some Calvinists try to soften it (by speaking of "passing over" rather than active reprobation), the logical conclusion of the system is unavoidable. This doctrine was taught by **John Calvin** in his *Institutes*, where he called it the "dreadful decree." It was solidified by his followers at the **Synod of Dort** (1619). This is one of the most controversial points of the system and has been rejected by the vast majority of Christendom, including **Lutherans, Arminians, Wesleyans, and Anabaptists**, as being inconsistent with the revealed character of God.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:18-23, 1 Peter 2:8, Jude 1:4, Proverbs 16:4

Verses of Correction: Genesis 18:25, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4, Romans 2:11

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for reprobation based on the "potter and clay" analogy often involves the **Appeal to Power** fallacy (*argumentum ad baculum*). This fallacy asserts that a position is true simply because the one making the claim has the power to enforce it. The argument

is essentially, "God is sovereign and all-powerful, therefore whatever He does is just, and you have no right to question it." This silences legitimate moral and theological questions by appealing to raw power rather than to reason, Scripture, or God's revealed character. Might does not make right, and the God of the Bible is not a being who needs to rely on such a fallacious appeal. His actions are just because they are righteous, not just because He is powerful.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **divorces God's will from His nature**. This is a philosophical position known as voluntarism, which claims that something is good simply because God wills it. The biblical position, however, is that God wills something because it is good—that is, because it aligns with His eternal, unchanging, and righteous nature. The voluntarist framework allows for a God who could will something that seems unjust or cruel, and it would still be, by definition, "good." The biblical framework insists that God's will is always an expression of His perfectly good and just character. Reprobation is conceivable within a voluntarist framework, but not within a biblical one.

Question 53. If a person's eternal destiny is fixed, what is the purpose of the final judgment according to works?

Answer 53. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): If a person's eternal destiny is immutably fixed by an unconditional, pre-temporal decree, then the great and terrible Day of Judgment is stripped of its primary purpose and reduced to a mere **public spectacle**. The Bible describes the final judgment as a genuine and solemn reckoning, where "the books were opened" and the dead were "judged out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works**" (Revelation 20:12). This is the language of evidence, of accountability, of a just verdict being rendered based on the life a person has lived. However, if the verdict of "saved" or "damned" was already determined before the foundation of the world, then the works are not the basis for the judgment at all. They become, at best, the public evidence used to vindicate God's pre-ordained decree. The judgment loses its function as a moment of ultimate, personal accountability and becomes, instead, a divine sentencing hearing where the sentence was written long before the trial. The biblical picture, however, is of a real judgment where a person's works are the true and accurate reflection of their heart's faith or unbelief, which is the very basis upon which the just sentence of God is pronounced.

Scripture References: Revelation 20:12-13, Matthew 16:27, Romans 2:6, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Peter 1:17, Ecclesiastes 12:14, Matthew 12:36-37

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that the judgment according to works is not to determine destiny, but to determine degrees of reward for the saved and degrees of punishment for the damned. While the Bible does speak of rewards for believers, this interpretation fails to account for the primary function of the Great White Throne judgment, which is to determine entry into the lake of fire. The basis for this final judgment is explicitly stated: "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). The judgment according to works serves to demonstrate *why* their name was not in the book (or was blotted out). It is about the basis for condemnation, not just the severity of it. The works are the evidence that proves the justice of the final verdict.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This is a point of logical tension within **Calvinistic** theology. While affirming the biblical doctrine of a final judgment according to works, the system's commitment to unconditional predestination requires that the purpose of this judgment be reinterpreted. **John Calvin** and the **Westminster Confession of Faith** (1646) teach that the judgment serves to manifest the glory of God's mercy in the elect and His justice in the reprobate. In this view, the works do not determine the outcome but merely demonstrate the righteousness of the predetermined outcome. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees the judgment as a genuine reckoning where a person's works serve as the definitive evidence of the faith (or lack thereof) that determines their eternal destiny.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:22-23, John 5:24, Romans 8:1

Verses of Correction: Revelation 20:12-13, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 2:6-8, Matthew 16:27

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the judgment only serves to vindicate God's prior decree commits the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy. The Bible sets the goalpost for the purpose of judgment: "God shall bring every work into judgment... whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). It is a comprehensive assessment. The deterministic view moves the goalpost, claiming the purpose is not assessment, but demonstration. It changes the fundamental purpose of the event to make it fit the system. It's like a student who fails an exam, and the teacher says, "The purpose of this exam was not to see if you learned the material, but to demonstrate that my initial prediction that you would fail was correct."

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views history as a script written for the benefit of the audience (the angels and saints) rather than a real drama involving the actors (humanity)**. In this philosophical view, historical events, including the final judgment, are not primarily about the participants, but are staged to demonstrate a truth to the spectators. The Bible, however, presents a profoundly different picture. The judgment is a terrifyingly real and personal event for the one being judged. It is the moment of ultimate accountability. While it certainly will display God's glory, its primary focus is the just and final disposition of every human soul based on their life and their response to God's grace.

Question 54. How does the doctrine of limited atonement impact the sincerity of God's universal offer of the Gospel?

Answer 54. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The doctrine of limited atonement, which teaches that Christ's death was intended to save only the elect, strikes at the very heart of the sincerity of the gospel offer. If the provision of salvation was not made for all, then the invitation to all cannot be genuine. The Bible presents a God who commands His gospel to be preached to "every creature" and who invites "whosoever will" to come and take the water of life freely. This is the language of a universal, bona fide offer. However, if Christ did not die for the person hearing that offer, then what exactly is being offered to them? It is an invitation to a feast for which no place has been set. It is an offer of a pardon that has not been written. This turns the gospel call into a **cruel and disingenuous charade**. A truthful God cannot make a false offer. The universal call of the gospel requires a universal provision. The fact that God sincerely invites all to be saved

is one of the most powerful proofs that Christ's death was sufficient for all. To believe otherwise is to embrace a view of God who speaks with a forked tongue, whose revealed will to save all is contradicted by a secret will to save only a few.

Scripture References: John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:4-6, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2, Hebrews 2:9, Mark 16:15, Revelation 22:17

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that the gospel offer is sincere in that it is a true statement of the *only way* of salvation, and it sincerely calls all men to their duty to repent and believe, even if they are unable to do so. This is a semantic shell game. An offer is not just a statement of fact; it is the presentation of a real possibility. To offer a drowning man a rope that is intentionally kept just out of his reach is not a sincere offer of rescue. Another **rebuttal** is that the offer is sufficient to hold the non-elect accountable for their rejection. This, again, paints a monstrous picture of God, where the purpose of the gospel call for the non-elect is not salvation, but the accumulation of greater guilt. This is contrary to the God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of Limited Atonement is the 'L' in the TULIP acronym of **Calvinism** and is a necessary logical entailment of the system. If election is unconditional, then the atonement must be limited to the elect. This doctrine, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches, was a point of major controversy from its inception. It was one of the key issues debated at the **Synod of Dort** (1619), which condemned the Arminian view of a universal atonement. The tension it creates with the universal call of the gospel has led some, like the 17th-century theologian **Moyse Amyraut**, to propose a modified "four-point" Calvinism that affirms a universal atonement.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 10:11, John 17:9, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25

Verses of Correction: 1 John 2:2, 1 Timothy 2:6, Hebrews 2:9, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, John 3:16

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for a sincere universal offer alongside a limited atonement often involves the **Fallacy of Equivocation** on the word "offer." In normal language, an "offer" implies the availability of the thing being offered. The Calvinistic use of "offer" in this context is different. It means something like "a declaration of the terms of salvation which you are obligated to meet, even if you are unable to and even if the salvation itself has not been provided for you." By using the common word "offer" but infusing it with a highly specialized and unusual theological meaning, the argument can create the illusion of sincerity while emptying the word of its plain, commonsense meaning.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **prioritizes the logical tidiness of a closed system over the relational integrity of God's character**. The system requires a limited atonement to be logically consistent. To protect that consistency, it is willing to sacrifice the sincerity of God's universal invitations. It is a philosophical choice that values systematic coherence above the plain, relational truth of a God who so loved *the world*. The Bible does not present a tidy philosophical system; it

presents a person, a loving Father, whose invitations are as sincere as His tears over a rebellious Jerusalem.

Question 55. If all things are decreed by God, does this render prayer, evangelism, and other means of grace unnecessary?

Answer 55. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): While proponents of determinism will argue that God decrees the means as well as the ends, the doctrine that all things are meticulously and unchangeably decreed by God logically **undermines the necessity and urgency** of prayer, evangelism, and other means of grace. The Bible presents these activities as real, dynamic interactions that genuinely change things. Prayer is not a monologue to inform God of what He has already decreed; it is a dialogue where the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Evangelism is not the mere act of discovering who the elect are; it is a desperate, persuasive plea for sinners to be reconciled to God, with eternal destinies hanging in the balance. If the number and identity of the elect are fixed from eternity, and their salvation is irresistibly secured, then these activities are reduced from being instrumental causes to being merely the decreed script that the actors must follow. Why pray with agonizing fervency for the salvation of a loved one if their fate is already sealed? Why risk one's life to preach the gospel in a hostile land if the outcome is already guaranteed? The biblical motivation for these means of grace is rooted in the belief that they are the God-ordained, but not guaranteed, means of changing hearts and shaping destinies.

Scripture References: James 5:16, Luke 18:1-8, Colossians 4:2-4, Romans 10:1, Romans 10:13-15, 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, 2 Timothy 2:24-26

Anticipated Rebuttals: The standard **rebuttal** is that God has not only decreed the end (the salvation of the elect), but He has also decreed the means to that end (the prayers of the saints and the preaching of the gospel). Therefore, we pray and evangelize because God has decreed that our prayers and evangelism are the instruments He will use to bring His elect to salvation. This argument, while logically clever, still fails to capture the biblical spirit of these activities. It turns a dynamic, relational struggle into a mechanical, predetermined process. It doesn't account for the genuine sense of contingency and urgency that pervades the biblical accounts of prayer and evangelism. Paul did not see himself as a cog in a machine, but as a co-laborer with God, traveling in birth for souls.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This is a point of significant practical tension within **Calvinism**. While **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches have a rich history of missions and prayer, it is often in spite of, rather than because of, the logical implications of their deterministic system. The perceived lack of evangelistic fervor in some hyper-Calvinistic circles is a direct result of following this doctrine to its logical conclusion. The system of **John Calvin** tried to hold both truths, but the tension is palpable. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which has historically been the driving force behind many of the great missionary and revival movements, precisely because its theology provides a powerful and coherent motivation for evangelism and intercessory prayer.

Verses of Apparent Support: Ephesians 1:11, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:28-30

Verses of Correction: James 5:16, Ezekiel 22:30, 2 Peter 3:9, Romans 10:14-15, 1 Corinthians 9:22

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that God decrees the means as well as the ends, when used to defend the necessity of prayer, can be seen as a **Causal Fallacy** (specifically, confusing correlation with causation in a deterministic system). In a system where everything is decreed, prayer does not *cause* the outcome. It is merely *correlated* with the outcome because both the prayer and the outcome were decreed to happen together. The prayer becomes a symptom, not a cause. It's like arguing that the rooster's crowing is the necessary means to the end of the sun rising. The two events are correlated, but one does not cause the other; a third factor (the rotation of the earth) causes both. In the deterministic system, God's decree is the third factor that causes both the prayer and the result.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's interaction with the world in terms of a closed, non-interactive system**. This is the philosophical model of deism or fatalism. Once the system is set in motion by God's decree, it unfolds according to the pre-written script, with no real, dynamic interaction. The Bible, however, presents an open, interactive system. It is a world where God genuinely responds to the prayers of His people, where He relents from judgment in response to repentance, and where the course of events can be altered by the intercession of the saints. It is a relational universe, not a mechanical one.

Question 56. How does the Calvinistic system address the problem of evil and suffering in the world?

Answer 56. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Calvinistic system addresses the profound problem of evil and suffering by placing it entirely within the scope of God's meticulous, sovereign, and permissive decree. In this architectural framework, nothing, not even the most horrific act of evil or the most agonizing moment of suffering, occurs outside of God's ultimate plan and purpose. The fall of Satan, the sin of Adam, every war, every disease, every tear—all are understood to be ordained by God for a greater, albeit often mysterious, purpose: the ultimate manifestation of His own glory. This solution offers a form of intellectual comfort by providing a comprehensive, all-encompassing answer that leaves no event to random chance. However, it achieves this comprehensiveness at an immense theological cost: it makes God the ultimate author of the evil and suffering He claims to hate. It presents a God who decrees the very thing His law forbids. The Bible, in contrast, presents a more complex and relational picture. It shows a God who is sovereign *over* evil, able to restrain it, permit it for His own purposes, and ultimately defeat it, but who is never its **originator or author**. The Bible attributes evil to the rebellious, free choices of created beings, and it portrays God not as the impassive architect of suffering, but as the compassionate Father who enters into our suffering to bring redemption.

Scripture References: Genesis 50:20, Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6, Lamentations 3:38, Romans 8:28, Romans 9:17-22, Acts 2:23, Acts 4:27-28

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is the appeal to the "greater good." The argument is that God ordains evil and suffering as a necessary means to achieve a greater good, such as the

display of His justice in punishing sin and His mercy in saving the elect. This is often illustrated by the cross, where God used the most evil act in history to bring about the greatest good. While it is true that God can bring good out of evil, this does not mean He authors the evil itself. There is a profound difference between a general who masterfully turns the enemy's attack into a victory, and a general who secretly orders his own troops to be attacked so that he can demonstrate his strategic brilliance. The "greater good" argument, in its deterministic form, leans toward the latter.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This particular theodicy (an explanation for the problem of evil) is a hallmark of **strict Calvinism**. The system's commitment to meticulous divine sovereignty, as articulated by **Augustine** and **John Calvin**, logically requires that evil be included within God's decree. This is often referred to as "compatibilism." This view is taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. It is one of the most difficult and pastorally problematic aspects of the system. It contrasts sharply with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** "free will defense," which attributes evil to the free, contingent choices of humans and angels, which God permitted but did not decree.

Verses of Apparent Support: Isaiah 45:7 ("I make peace, and create evil"), Amos 3:6 ("shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?"), Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28

Verses of Correction: James 1:13 ("God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man"), Habakkuk 1:13 ("Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil"), 1 John 1:5 ("God is light, and in him is no darkness at all")

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that God ordains evil for a greater good can, in its extreme form, become a version of the **Ends Justify the Means** fallacy. This fallacy argues that a goal is so noble that any method of achieving it, no matter how immoral, is justified. While God can and does bring good from evil, the deterministic view implies that God *chose* evil as His preferred means to His end. The Bible, however, presents a God who works His will in a world that is already fallen due to the free choices of His creatures. He is a redeemer who works within the tragic reality of evil, not a cosmic chess player who ordains evil as a necessary move in His game.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's glory as something that needed the existence of sin and hell to be fully displayed**. This is a philosophical speculation that is not explicitly taught in Scripture. It presumes that God's mercy could not be known without sin, and His justice could not be known without hell. The Bible, however, presents a God who is eternally glorious in His own triune nature, apart from creation. While He does display His glory through His redemptive work in a fallen world, it is a speculative leap to say that He therefore *needed* to ordain the fall to achieve this. It is a philosophical theodicy that risks making evil a necessary and integral part of God's eternal plan.

Question 57. Does the doctrine of unconditional election foster humility or a sense of spiritual elitism?

Answer 57. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): While proponents of unconditional election argue that it ought to produce profound humility, its practical and psychological tendency

throughout history has often been to foster a subtle but pervasive **spiritual elitism**. The argument for humility is that if salvation is entirely of God's sovereign choice, with no contribution from the individual, then there is no room for boasting. In theory, this is true. However, the belief that one has been chosen from eternity as a special object of God's saving love, while the vast majority of humanity has been passed over or ordained to damnation, can easily morph into a sense of being part of an exclusive, celestial in-group. It can create a "we-they" mentality that looks upon the "non-elect" with a mixture of pity and a sense of detached superiority. True biblical humility is not born from the belief that we were the passive recipients of an exclusive and arbitrary decree. It is born from the staggering realization that God's grace was offered to all, that we were just as rebellious and undeserving as anyone else, and that we are saved only because we cast ourselves, by His enabling grace, upon a mercy that was wide enough to include our worst enemy. The ground is truly level at the foot of the cross; unconditional election subtly tilts that ground.

Scripture References: Romans 12:3, 1 Corinthians 4:7, Galatians 6:3, Philippians 2:3, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5-6

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** will be to quote 1 Corinthians 4:7, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" This is used to argue that any view that includes human choice allows for boasting, whereas the doctrine of unconditional election removes all grounds for boasting. This argument, however, creates a false dilemma. A faith that is itself a response to enabling grace is not a meritorious work. To believe is simply to receive a gift. Is there any glory in a beggar who accepts a handout? The glory belongs to the giver. The Arminian/Wesleyan position does not teach that faith is a "work" that earns salvation; it is the empty hand that receives it. The potential for pride exists in any theological system, but the structure of unconditional election provides a unique and fertile ground for it to grow.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The potential for spiritual elitism has been a recurring critique of **Calvinism** throughout its history. While many individual Calvinists are genuinely humble people, the system itself has been associated with a certain intellectual and spiritual pride. The history of the **Puritans** in New England, for example, shows a society where the "elect" held a privileged and often severe position over the rest of the community. The harshness of the **Synod of Dort** (1619) in its condemnation of the Arminians is another historical example. This tendency was noted by critics like **John Wesley** in the 18th century, who argued that the doctrine tended to produce a "sour godliness" rather than the joyful humility of a forgiven sinner.

Verses of Apparent Support: 1 Corinthians 4:7, Romans 9:16, Ephesians 2:8-9

Verses of Correction: Luke 18:9-14 (The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican), Philippians 2:3, Romans 12:16, 1 Peter 5:5

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that unconditional election is the only basis for true humility commits the **False Dilemma** fallacy. It presents only two options: either you believe in unconditional election and are truly humble, or you believe that faith is a choice and you are therefore prideful and boasting in your works. This ignores the vast middle ground of biblical teaching, where a Spirit-enabled faith is not a meritorious work but a humble reception of grace.

It's like arguing, "Either you admit the lottery company forced you to win, or you are pridefully boasting that you bought the ticket yourself." It ignores the humble gratitude of simply accepting a gift.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views human action in a zero-sum relationship with divine grace**. This philosophical model assumes that if human beings contribute anything to the process, even the act of faith, it must detract from God's glory. So, to maximize God's glory, human action must be reduced to zero. The Bible, however, presents a different model. God is glorified when His creatures respond to Him in faith and obedience. He is glorified by our worship, our love, our good works. The relationship is not zero-sum; it is synergistic. God's grace is not magnified by our passivity, but by our active, joyful, and willing response to His love.

Question 58. How does the belief in irresistible grace affect personal responsibility and the motivation for holy living?

Answer 58. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): While not its intention, the belief in irresistible grace, especially when coupled with the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, can have a corrosive effect on a believer's sense of urgent personal responsibility and their motivation for diligent, holy living. The Bible is filled with active, strenuous language regarding the Christian life. We are commanded to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," to "strive to enter in at the strait gate," to "fight the good fight of faith," and to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." This is the language of effort, of struggle, of a race to be run. If, however, one believes that their salvation is not only initiated but also infallibly and irresistibly carried to completion by divine grace, the "fear and trembling" can easily be replaced by a dangerous complacency. The motivation for a radical pursuit of holiness can be blunted if one believes their final destination is guaranteed regardless of their performance in the race. The biblical model, in contrast, creates a healthy, dynamic tension. It motivates us with the glorious promises of God's sustaining grace while simultaneously spurring us on with the solemn warnings of the consequences of spiritual laziness and disobedience. It is this very tension that produces a life of watchful, diligent, and responsible faith.

Scripture References: Philippians 2:12, Luke 13:24, 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Peter 1:10, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Hebrews 4:11, Hebrews 12:1, Hebrews 12:14

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that true, irresistible grace will inevitably produce a desire for holiness. The argument is that the regenerate person *will* want to live a holy life, so the motivation is not a problem. While it is true that a new nature desires to please God, this argument underestimates the ongoing power of the flesh and the reality of spiritual warfare. The Bible portrays sanctification through faith in the one sacrifice of Christ. Another **rebuttal** is that the primary motivation for holiness should be gratitude, not fear of consequences. While gratitude is a powerful motivator, the Bible is not shy about using both positive and negative motivations. The "terror of the Lord" and the "fear of God" are presented as legitimate and healthy motivators for the believer.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This potential for antinomianism (the belief that one is not bound by moral law) has been a recurring criticism of **Calvinism** since the Reformation. While mainstream **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches strongly teach the necessity of sanctification, the internal logic of their system can be misused to justify spiritual laxity. This is particularly true in some forms of **Free Grace** theology, which can take the doctrine of eternal security to an extreme that detaches it almost entirely from the believer's actual life. This was a major point of contention for **John Wesley** in the 18th century, who argued that the Calvinistic system, by removing the healthy fear of falling away, inadvertently cut the "sinews of all holy living."

Verses of Apparent Support: Philippians 1:6, Romans 6:14, Jude 1:24, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Verses of Correction: Philippians 2:12, 1 Corinthians 9:27, Hebrews 12:14, 2 Peter 1:10, Romans 8:13

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that irresistible grace automatically produces holiness can fall into the **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The premise is, "A person with irresistible grace will live a holy life." When confronted with a professing Calvinist who lives an unholy life, the response is often, "Well, they must not have truly received irresistible grace." This protects the theory by redefining the subject to exclude any counterexamples. It avoids the difficult pastoral reality that believers, even those with a sound theological framework, still struggle mightily with sin and need the motivation of both promises and warnings.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views human motivation in overly simplistic and monistic terms**. It assumes that if a person has a new nature, that new nature will be the sole and determining driver of all their actions. The Bible, however, presents a more complex, dualistic picture of the believer's internal life. There is an ongoing war between the "flesh" and the "Spirit" (Galatians 5:17). The believer has a new nature, but the old nature has not been eradicated. Motivation is therefore a complex issue, requiring not just the existence of a new nature, but the diligent, moment-by-moment choice to "walk in the Spirit" and "mortify the deeds of the body."

Question 59. If God is the ultimate cause of all things, including unbelief, how can He be said to take "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11)?

Answer 59. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The solemn, covenantal oath of God in Ezekiel 33:11 is a direct and irreconcilable contradiction to any system that makes Him the ultimate cause of unbelief. God declares, "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have **no pleasure in the death of the wicked**; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" This is one of the clearest revelations of the heart of God in all of Scripture. It is a passionate, earnest plea, revealing His genuine desire for the salvation of the very people who are perishing. If, however, God has eternally and unchangeably decreed that these same wicked people would live in unbelief and be damned, then this verse becomes a piece of divine double-talk. How can God take no pleasure in an outcome that He Himself has sovereignly and meticulously ordained? It would mean His revealed desire is the opposite of His secret decree. This portrays a God who is either insincere or internally conflicted. The only way to preserve the integrity of God's character and the plain meaning of this

text is to believe that God's pleasure is indeed for all to turn and live, and that the reason they die is not because of a divine decree, but because of their own willful choice to reject His gracious plea.

Scripture References: Ezekiel 33:11, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 18:32, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4, Luke 19:41-42

Anticipated Rebuttals: The standard **rebuttal** is the "two wills" of God theory. The argument is that God's "preceptive will" (His revealed commands and desires) is that the wicked should turn and live, and He takes no pleasure in their death according to this will. However, His "decretive will" (His secret, eternal plan) has ordained their death for His own glory, and in this sense, He does take pleasure in the execution of His plan. This sophisticated philosophical device, however, is not explicitly found in Scripture. It is a construct designed to resolve a contradiction created by the system itself. It saves the system but does so by creating a God with two contradictory wills, a picture that is foreign to the unified, integrated character of the God of the Bible.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This is a profound point of tension within **Calvinism**. The system developed by **John Calvin**, which emphasizes God's meticulous decree over all things, must find a way to reconcile this with the clear statements of God's universal, benevolent desires. The "two wills" theory became the standard explanation within **Reformed and Presbyterian** theology. This was a major point of contention for **Jacobus Arminius** and **John Wesley**, who argued that such a distinction made God seem duplicitous. They insisted that God's revealed will is His true will, and that He genuinely desires the salvation of all.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:18, Romans 9:22, Proverbs 16:4

Verses of Correction: Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4, Ezekiel 18:23, Matthew 23:37

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The "two wills" argument is a classic example of the **Equivocation** fallacy. It uses the key word "will" in two different and contradictory senses within the same argument, in order to resolve a paradox. It speaks of God's "will" of desire and His "will" of decree as if they were the same category, when in fact the system sets them in opposition to each other. By equivocating on the term "will," the argument can create the illusion of a solution, while in reality, it has simply created a God who simultaneously wills and does not will the same outcome. It's a verbal shell game that obscures rather than clarifies.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's pleasure in purely utilitarian terms**. This philosophical bias assumes that God's ultimate "pleasure" is the successful execution of His eternal, deterministic plan, whatever that may be. It detaches His pleasure from His inherent moral character. The Bible, however, presents God's pleasure as being rooted in His nature. He takes pleasure in righteousness, mercy, and life because He *is* righteous, merciful, and living. He takes no pleasure in wickedness and death because they are contrary to His very being. The "two wills" theory requires a God whose ultimate pleasure in His own decree can override His natural displeasure with sin and death.

Question 60. How does the Calvinistic understanding of God's sovereignty compare with the biblical portrayal of God as a relational being who interacts with and responds to His creation?

Answer 60. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Calvinistic understanding of God's sovereignty, particularly in its more rigid forms, presents a God who is a meticulous, all-determining micromanager of the universe. This stands in stark contrast to the biblical portrayal of God as a profoundly **relational, interactive, and responsive** being. The pages of Scripture are filled with the drama of a God who engages with His creation. He walks with Adam in the cool of the day. He reasons with Cain. He makes covenants with Noah and Abraham. He pleads with Israel through the prophets. He responds to the prayers of His people, sometimes even "repenting" or relenting from a threatened course of action (as with Nineveh). Jesus weeps over Jerusalem's rebellion. This is not the picture of a divine puppeteer pulling the strings of a predetermined script. This is the picture of a King and a Father who has sovereignly chosen to enter into a real, dynamic, and often messy relationship with the creatures He has made in His own image. The deterministic view of sovereignty, borrowed more from Greek philosophy than the Hebrew scriptures, tends to flatten this rich, relational narrative into a sterile, philosophical monologue, sacrificing the personal God of the Bible for a more logically tidy, but less biblical, Prime Mover.

Scripture References: Genesis 3:8-9, Genesis 4:6-7, Genesis 18:17-33, Exodus 32:14, Jonah 3:10, Jeremiah 18:7-10, Luke 19:41, James 5:16

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that the instances of God "repenting" or responding to prayer are anthropomorphisms—human ways of speaking about God that are not meant to be taken literally as a change in His eternal, unchangeable plan. The argument is that God has decreed both the prayer and His response to it from eternity. While it is true that God's eternal nature does not change, this explanation can drain the reality from the biblical encounters. It suggests that Abraham's intercession for Sodom or Moses' plea for Israel were not genuine interactions that influenced the outcome, but merely a divinely scripted performance. The Bible, however, presents these as real encounters with real stakes. To reduce them to mere anthropomorphisms is to risk losing the very relational heart of the biblical story.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The more rigid, deterministic view of sovereignty is a hallmark of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. The system, as developed by **Augustine and Calvin**, emphasizes the impassibility and immutability of God in a way that can minimize the relational and responsive aspects of His character revealed in the biblical narrative. This has been a point of contention with other theological traditions. **Arminianism and Wesleyanism**, as well as the modern movement of **Open Theism**, place a much stronger emphasis on the relational and responsive nature of God, arguing that the deterministic model is a product of Greek philosophical influence (particularly Neoplatonism) on Christian theology.

Verses of Apparent Support: Malachi 3:6 ("I am the LORD, I change not"), Numbers 23:19, James 1:17, Isaiah 46:10

Verses of Correction: Genesis 18:23-32, Exodus 32:14, Jonah 3:10, Jeremiah 26:19, Amos 7:3-6

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that all of God's responsive actions are mere anthropomorphisms can become a form of the **Special Pleading** fallacy. It creates a special rule of interpretation for any passage that threatens the system. The rule is: "Any text that portrays God as changing His mind or responding to human action must be interpreted non-literally as an anthropomorphism. Any text that portrays Him as unchanging must be interpreted literally." This inconsistent hermeneutic allows the system to dismiss a large body of inconvenient biblical data by placing it in a special, non-literal category. It's a method of protecting a belief by refusing to apply the same interpretive standards to all the evidence.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption, borrowed from **classical Greek philosophy (particularly Plato and Aristotle)**, that **perfection requires immutability and impassibility**. In this philosophical framework, a perfect being cannot change or be affected by anything outside of itself. This idea was imported into Christian theology by early thinkers like Augustine. The God of the Hebrew Bible, however, is not the "unmoved mover" of Aristotle. He is a living, personal, and passionate God who enters into the messiness of human history and allows Himself to be affected by the relationship He has with His people. The philosophical error is to impose this Greek ideal of static perfection onto the dynamic, relational God of the Bible.

Historical and Textual Considerations

Question 61. Is the TULIP framework a direct summary of biblical teaching, or is it a later theological construct developed by the followers of John Calvin?

Answer 61. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The TULIP acronym (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints) is not a direct summary of biblical teaching that emerges from a plain reading of Scripture. It is a **later theological construct**, a highly systematic and philosophical framework that was not created by John Calvin himself, but was developed after his death to summarize the key judgments of the **Synod of Dort** in 1618-1619. This synod was a political and theological council convened specifically to refute the five points of the Remonstrants (the followers of Jacobus Arminius). The TULIP acronym, therefore, is a reactionary and polemical device. It represents a deductive approach to theology: it starts with a core philosophical premise about God's meticulous sovereignty and then arranges select biblical data to fit that logical structure. An inductive, topical Bible study, where one gathers all the verses on a subject and allows the doctrine to emerge from the harmonized whole, would not produce this neat, five-point system. It is a product of post-Reformation scholasticism, not a direct summary of the apostolic faith.

Scripture References: (The TULIP system is a construct, so there are no verses that list it. It is built by synthesizing verses that are believed to support each point.)

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that while the acronym itself is a later invention, the doctrines it represents are thoroughly biblical and were taught by Jesus, the apostles, and church fathers like Augustine long before the Synod of Dort. This argument contains a partial truth. The Bible certainly speaks about depravity, election, atonement, grace, and perseverance. The issue is not the topics themselves, but the specific, systematic, and extreme formulation of

those topics found in TULIP. For example, the Bible teaches depravity, but not necessarily the "Total Inability" of the 'T'. It teaches election, but not necessarily the "Unconditional" election of the 'U'. The TULIP framework takes each of these biblical topics and pushes them to their most deterministic, philosophical extreme, creating a system that is more rigid and less balanced than the biblical presentation itself.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The TULIP acronym is the most famous summary of the soteriology of **Calvinism**. It is the defining framework for **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches worldwide. Its formulation at the **Synod of Dort (1619)** was a watershed moment in Protestant history, solidifying the division between the Calvinistic and Arminian branches of the Reformation. While **John Calvin's** *Institutes* (1536) laid the essential groundwork for all five points, the acronym itself is a later, more rigid codification of his thought, designed for the specific purpose of theological combat.

Verses of Apparent Support: (Each point has its own set of proof texts, which are often the same verses listed as "Apparent Support" in the previous answers for each topic.)

Verses of Correction: (A full topical study of each of the five points, gathering all relevant verses, provides the correction to the imbalanced TULIP formulation.)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The TULIP framework itself is an example of the **Fallacy of Oversimplification** (also known as the causal reductionism). It takes the rich, complex, and often paradoxical biblical teachings on salvation and reduces them to five neat, logically interconnected points. This process inevitably smooths over textual difficulties, ignores counter-evidence, and forces the sprawling, organic testimony of Scripture into a tidy, man-made box. It sacrifices comprehensive biblical fidelity for the sake of systematic coherence. It's like trying to summarize a great, epic novel with a five-sentence plot summary; you might capture the main idea, but you lose all the nuance, character development, and richness of the original story.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **rationalism**, the belief that the truths of God must be containable within a logically coherent and non-contradictory human system. This philosophical impulse, which gained great traction during the period of Protestant Scholasticism, seeks to create a "systematic theology" that is as logically rigorous as a work of philosophy. The TULIP framework is a product of this rationalistic desire. The Bible, however, is not a systematic theology textbook. It is a collection of diverse, inspired texts that reveal truth through narrative, poetry, prophecy, and paradox. The attempt to force this rich, multi-textured revelation into a rigid, rationalistic system will always do violence to the text.

Question 62. How did the early church fathers before Augustine understand the doctrines of free will, election, and grace?

Answer 62. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The overwhelming and consistent testimony of the early church fathers before Augustine of Hippo (who wrote in the late 4th and early 5th centuries) was a firm belief in the **freedom of the human will** to respond to God's grace. The deterministic doctrines that would later form the basis of Calvinism were almost entirely absent

from the first three centuries of Christian thought. Early fathers like **Justin Martyr** (c. 160 AD), **Irenaeus** (c. 180 AD), **Tertullian** (c. 200 AD), and **Origen** (c. 230 AD) consistently taught that human beings are responsible moral agents who possess the ability to choose or reject the gospel. They understood election to be based on God's **foreknowledge** of who would believe. They saw grace not as an irresistible, coercive force, but as a divine assistance, a persuasive and enabling power that works with the human will. The idea of an inherited guilt from Adam that destroys the will's freedom, and an unconditional, individual predestination to salvation or damnation, were not part of the apostolic faith as understood by the early church. Augustine's later theological shift represented a significant and controversial departure from this ancient consensus.

Scripture References: (The teachings of the church fathers are historical data, not scripture. They based their views on the same scriptures debated today, such as Deuteronomy 30:19, John 3:16, and Romans 9.)

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to claim that the early fathers were not as theologically precise as the later Reformers and that their views on free will were tainted by Greek philosophy. It is argued that Augustine, through a deeper study of Paul, corrected the errors of his predecessors. This argument is a form of chronological snobbery. While the fathers did engage with philosophy, their emphasis on free will was primarily a reaction against the fatalism of Gnosticism and Stoicism, which they saw as unbiblical. Another **rebuttal** is to "cherry-pick" isolated quotes from the fathers that seem to hint at a stronger view of sovereignty, while ignoring the vast body of their work that clearly affirms free will. A fair reading of the historical record shows a clear and dominant belief in human freedom and responsibility in the pre-Augustinian church.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The historical record of the early church fathers presents a significant challenge to the claims of **Calvinism** that its doctrines represent the original, apostolic faith. **Reformed and Presbyterian** theologians must argue that the true faith was essentially lost or corrupted until it was recovered by **Augustine** in the 5th century and then fully restored by **John Calvin** in the 16th. This view of church history is necessary to sustain the system. The historical evidence is so strong that it has led many scholars to conclude that Augustine's deterministic views were an innovation, heavily influenced by his background in Manichaean and Neoplatonic philosophy, and his intense polemical battle with the Pelagians.

Verses of Apparent Support: (Historical argument, not based on specific verses.)

Verses of Correction: (Historical argument, not based on specific verses.)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the early fathers were theologically imprecise and that Augustine "corrected" them commits the **Appeal to Progress** fallacy (a form of chronological snobbery). This fallacy assumes that later ideas are inherently better or more correct simply because they are later. It dismisses the views of the early church, who were closer in time, language, and culture to the apostles, in favor of a theological system developed centuries later in a completely different context. It's like arguing that a modern commentary on Shakespeare is inherently more accurate than the notes of an actor who worked with Shakespeare himself, simply because the commentary is more recent and "systematic."

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **theological development is always a linear progression toward greater truth**. This is a modern, evolutionary view of history applied to doctrine. It fails to consider the biblical and historical reality of apostasy and doctrinal drift. The Bible warns that the church will be infiltrated by false teachings and that there will be a "falling away." It is entirely possible, and historically demonstrable, that later theological developments can be a corruption of, rather than an improvement upon, the original faith. The proximity of the early fathers to the apostolic age gives their testimony a weight that cannot be easily dismissed by an appeal to later, more "developed" systems.

Question 63. What is the "cherry-picking fallacy," and how might it apply to the way different theological systems use Scripture?

Answer 63. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The "cherry-picking fallacy," also known as the fallacy of incomplete evidence or suppressed evidence, is the act of selecting and presenting only the data that supports one's own position, while intentionally or unintentionally ignoring the body of evidence that might contradict it. This is one of the most common and deceptive errors in the construction of theological systems. The Bible is a large and complex book, and it is possible to build a seemingly coherent case for almost any doctrine by carefully selecting a handful of verses that appear to support it, while systematically ignoring or explaining away the verses that challenge it. For example, a theological system like Calvinism is built by **cherry-picking** the verses that emphasize God's sovereignty, predestination, and election (like Romans 9 and John 6). It then treats these as the controlling texts and forces all other verses—those that speak of God's universal love, man's free will, and the conditional nature of salvation—to be reinterpreted in light of the pre-selected "key" texts. A true, honest topical Bible study does the opposite. It demands that **all the cherries be picked**, that every relevant verse on a subject be brought to the table and harmonized, allowing the full counsel of God, not a biased selection, to determine the final doctrine.

Scripture References: Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:6, 2 Timothy 2:15, Acts 20:27, Revelation 22:18-19

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to deny that any cherry-picking is taking place. Proponents of a system will argue that they *do* consider all the verses, but that the verses that seem to contradict their system are simply being "interpreted correctly" in light of the clearer, more foundational texts. This argument, however, begs the question. Who decides which texts are "clearer" and more "foundational"? Invariably, the texts chosen as the interpretive key are the very ones that support the preconceived system. It is a circular method that uses the system to interpret the Bible, rather than using the Bible to build the system. A truly foundational text should be one that is simple, direct, and less open to interpretation, not one that is complex and highly debated (like Romans 9).

Churches Teaching Fallacies: Virtually every rigid theological system is guilty of the cherry-picking fallacy to some degree, as the very nature of a "system" is to organize data around a central, controlling principle. This is particularly evident in **Calvinism**, which elevates the doctrine of meticulous sovereignty to be the interpretive grid for the entire Bible. It is also seen in **Seventh-**

day Adventism, which elevates the Sabbath and the teachings of Ellen White as the key to understanding Scripture. It is seen in **Roman Catholicism**, which elevates church tradition to the same level as Scripture, allowing it to select which interpretation is correct. The only antidote to this fallacy is a radical commitment to a topical study method that honors every verse and refuses to build a doctrine until all the evidence has been honestly weighed.

Verses of Apparent Support: (This is a fallacy of method, not of a specific doctrine.)

Verses of Correction: (These verses command a full and honest handling of God's Word.) Acts 20:27, 2 Timothy 2:15, Deuteronomy 4:2

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The cherry-picking fallacy is a straightforward **Fallacy of Suppressed Evidence**. It is the act of intentionally failing to use information that is relevant to the conclusion. It is a sin of omission. It's like a real estate agent who tells you about the beautiful new kitchen and the spacious backyard of a house, but "forgets" to mention the black mold in the basement and the cracked foundation. The information he gives you is true, but because he has suppressed the contradictory evidence, the conclusion you draw (that this is a great house to buy) is false. This is precisely how systematic theology often works.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **deductive reasoning**, as opposed to inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning starts with a general principle or premise and then reasons down to specific conclusions. Inductive reasoning starts with specific pieces of evidence and then reasons up to a general principle. Theological systems are often built deductively. They start with a philosophical premise (e.g., "God is meticulously sovereign") and then deduce what must be true about election, atonement, etc. A topical Bible study is inductive. It starts with the specific evidence (all the verses on a topic) and allows the general principle (the doctrine) to emerge from the evidence. The deductive method is prone to the cherry-picking fallacy because it will naturally favor the evidence that fits its starting premise.

Question 64. How does the doctrine of the Book of Life, as presented throughout the Bible, challenge the foundational tenets of Calvinism?

Answer 64. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The biblical doctrine of the Book of Life stands as a powerful, self-contained refutation of the foundational tenets of Calvinism, particularly Unconditional Election and the Perseverance of the Saints. The architectural design of this doctrine is not about names being added, but about the terrifying possibility of names being **blotted out**. This is the key that unlocks the entire structure. God Himself declares this principle to Moses: "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I **blot out of my book**" (Exodus 32:33). The promise of Christ to the overcomer in Revelation 3:5 is not that their name will be written, but that He will **not blot out** their name. This implies that the names are already there, and the danger is removal. This leads to a biblically harmonious model that Calvinism cannot accommodate: God, in His universal love and foreknowledge, wrote every name in His book from the beginning. This affirms a universal, gracious provision. However, a person's place is conditional upon a living, persevering faith. Through final, unrepentant sin, that place can be forfeited. This doctrine single-handedly

demolishes the 'U' and the 'P' of TULIP, replacing a rigid, deterministic system with a dynamic, relational one that perfectly upholds both God's sovereign grace and man's solemn responsibility.

Scripture References: Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, Daniel 12:1, Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:12-15, Revelation 21:27, Revelation 22:19

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is to create a distinction between the "Book of Life" (a temporary register of all living people or covenant members) and the "Lamb's Book of Life" (an eternal, unchangeable list of the elect). They argue that names can be blotted out of the former, but not the latter. This distinction, however, is an artificial construct not found in Scripture. The Bible uses the terms interchangeably and connects being in "the book" directly with eternal salvation (Daniel 12:1, Revelation 21:27). Another **rebuttal** is that the warnings are hypothetical, meant only to motivate the elect who could never actually be blotted out. This turns God's solemn warnings into a form of insincere motivation and does violence to the plain meaning of the text.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrines of Unconditional Election and Perseverance of the Saints are central to **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. The system, as formalized by **John Calvin** and the **Synod of Dort**, requires the list of the saved to be eternally fixed. Therefore, the clear biblical evidence that names can be blotted out of the Book of Life presents a severe theological problem that must be neutralized through complex, extra-biblical explanations like the "two books" theory. This contrasts with the view of many **Anabaptists and Arminians**, who have long seen the doctrine of the Book of Life as a clear biblical support for conditional security.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 10:28-29, Romans 8:30, Philippians 1:6

Verses of Correction: Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 22:19, Psalm 69:28, Hebrews 6:4-6

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The "two books" theory is a classic example of the **Ad Hoc Rescue** fallacy. The original belief ("the list of the saved is unchangeable") is falsified by the clear evidence that names can be blotted out of "the book." To save the original belief, a new, unsupported element is invented: a second, different book from which names *cannot* be blotted out. This new element is introduced "for this" specific purpose—to rescue the theory. It is a desperate maneuver that has no basis in the biblical text itself, but is required to protect the man-made system.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's plan in terms of a static, unchangeable list rather than a living, covenantal record**. This is a preference for a bureaucratic, administrative model of salvation. A list is fixed; a record is updated. The Bible presents the Book of Life as a living document that reflects the current standing of individuals in their covenant relationship with God. The philosophical error is to impose a static, fatalistic concept (an unchangeable list) onto a dynamic, relational one (a covenantal record).

Question 65. What is the significance of the fact that the term "elect" in the Gospels and Romans often refers specifically to the nation of Israel?

Answer 65. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The fact that the term "elect" or "chosen" in the Gospels and Romans often refers specifically to the **corporate, covenantal nation of Israel** is of monumental significance. It means that the primary architectural pillars used to construct the Calvinistic doctrine of individual, unconditional election are being removed from their proper foundation. When Jesus speaks of shortening the days of tribulation for the "elect's sake" (Matthew 24:22), the context is undeniably the Jewish people in Judea. When Paul agonizes over his "kinsmen according to the flesh" in Romans 9, his entire argument about election (Jacob vs. Esau, etc.) is framed by the question of Israel's status as God's chosen people. To ignore this primary, national, and historical context and to instead read a later, philosophical definition of "individual predestination to salvation" back into these texts is a profound act of interpretive violence. It atomizes a corporate concept and dehistoricizes a covenantal one. The New Testament's great revelation is not that God has a secret list of elect individuals, but that the "elect" people of God has now been expanded through Christ to include both Jews and Gentiles who believe.

Scripture References: Deuteronomy 7:6, Isaiah 45:4, Matthew 24:22-31, Romans 9:1-13, Romans 11:1-2, Romans 11:28, 1 Peter 2:9

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to concede the national context but to argue that God's dealings with national Israel reveal the *principles* by which He deals with individuals. The argument is that the sovereign way He chose the nation is the same sovereign way He chooses individuals for salvation. This is a leap of logic that assumes a uniform methodology in all of God's actions. God's choice of a nation for a specific historical purpose (to bring forth the Messiah) is a different category of action than His offer of salvation to all individuals. Furthermore, the election of national Israel was clearly not an unconditional election to salvation for every individual within it, as the vast majority were ultimately "broken off" through unbelief. The analogy, if followed consistently, would actually support conditional election for individuals.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The failure to recognize the primary referent of "elect" as national Israel is a foundational error of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. The system, as developed by **Augustine and Calvin**, requires these key texts in Romans 9 and elsewhere to be about individual, metaphysical predestination. This interpretation is necessary to support the 'U' (Unconditional Election) in TULIP. By decontextualizing the term, the system can build its case on what appear to be strong proof texts. However, once the original historical and covenantal context is restored, these pillars are shown to be resting on sand.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 8:33, Ephesians 1:4, 2 Timothy 2:10, Titus 1:1

Verses of Correction: Deuteronomy 7:6, Isaiah 45:4, Matthew 24:22, Romans 9:1-5, Romans 11:28, 1 Peter 2:9

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The misapplication of the term "elect" is a clear example of the **Contextomy** fallacy (quoting out of context). It involves isolating a word or phrase from its surrounding context in order to impose a different meaning upon it. By lifting the word "elect" out

of its specific, historical context of God's dealings with the nation of Israel and placing it into an abstract, systematic context of individual soteriology, the meaning is fundamentally altered. It's like taking the phrase "one giant leap for mankind" out of the context of the moon landing and using it to argue that all humans should take up long jumping.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **privileges abstract, timeless principles over concrete, historical events**. This is a philosophical bias, often inherited from Greek thought (like Plato's theory of forms), that seeks the universal, unchanging idea behind the particular, historical manifestation. The Calvinistic system does this with election. It seeks an abstract, eternal principle of "individual election" and sees God's historical election of Israel as merely one example of this timeless principle. The Bible, however, is a profoundly historical book. Its doctrines are revealed through God's concrete acts in time and space. The historical election of Israel is not an example of a principle; it is the primary story from which our understanding of election must be derived.

Question 66. How does a pre-70 AD dating of the New Testament books affect our understanding of prophecies related to Israel and the "end times"?

Answer 66. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): A pre-70 AD dating for the majority of the New Testament books—a view held by a growing number of conservative scholars—radically reorients our understanding of "end times" prophecy. It anchors the dramatic, apocalyptic language of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) and much of the book of Revelation to a specific, imminent, historical event: the catastrophic end of the Old Covenant age, which culminated in the **destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple by the Romans in 70 AD**. When Jesus speaks of "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled," He is referring to the generation of His contemporaries. The "coming of the Son of man" in judgment, the "great tribulation," and the "abomination of desolation" are understood as powerful, prophetic descriptions of this covenant-ending judgment upon national Israel. This perspective, often called Preterism, does not necessarily deny a future, final Second Coming, but it recognizes that many prophecies that have been projected into our distant future had a profound and devastating fulfillment for the apostles' original audience. It shifts the focus from speculative newspaper eschatology to the immense theological significance of the transition from the Old Covenant to the New.

Scripture References: Matthew 24:1-34, Mark 13:1-30, Luke 21:5-32, Daniel 9:26-27, 1 Peter 4:7 ("the end of all things is at hand"), Hebrews 8:13 ("he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away")

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** comes from Futurists, who insist that the language of the Olivet Discourse and Revelation is too cosmic and global to refer to a local event in Judea. They will point to phrases like the sun being darkened, the stars falling from heaven, and the Son of man coming on the clouds. This **rebuttal**, however, fails to appreciate the nature of biblical, apocalyptic language. The Old Testament prophets frequently used this same kind of cosmic, de-creation language to describe the historical judgments upon nations like Babylon, Egypt, and Edom (e.g., Isaiah 13:10). It is symbolic language used to convey the theological significance of a world-

shaking historical event, not a literal, meteorological report. The "coming" of the Lord in judgment is a common theme that does not always refer to the final, physical Second Coming.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The dominant view in modern American evangelicalism is **Dispensational Futurism**, which projects nearly all of these prophecies into a future seven-year tribulation period. This system was popularized in the 19th century by **John Nelson Darby** and later through the **Scofield Reference Bible** (1909). This view is central to the theology of many **Baptist, Pentecostal, and non-denominational** churches. A pre-70 AD dating of the New Testament provides a significant challenge to this system, suggesting that its elaborate charts and timelines are based on a misinterpretation of prophecies that were fulfilled nearly 2,000 years ago. The Preterist view, while less popular, has deep historical roots and has been held by many theologians throughout church history.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For a future fulfillment) Acts 1:11, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Revelation 1:7 ("every eye shall see him")

Verses of Correction: Matthew 24:34 ("This generation shall not pass..."), Matthew 10:23, Matthew 16:28, Hebrews 8:13, 1 Peter 4:7

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The Futurist interpretation of these prophecies often commits the **Fallacy of Anachronism**. This fallacy occurs when an idea or concept from a later time period is read back into a historical text. Modern readers, accustomed to scientific literalism and global consciousness, read the cosmic language of the Olivet Discourse and assume it must refer to the literal end of the physical planet. They are reading their modern, post-Enlightenment worldview back into a 1st-century Jewish apocalyptic text. The original audience would have understood this symbolic, covenantal language in the context of the Old Testament prophets, recognizing it as a powerful description of a local, yet theologically world-ending, divine judgment.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **wooden literalism** in the interpretation of prophetic and apocalyptic genres. This philosophical approach to hermeneutics fails to recognize that different types of literature in the Bible have different rules of interpretation. It attempts to read poetry and apocalyptic symbolism with the same literalness as historical narrative or legal codes. The Bible is not a flat book. Apocalyptic literature, in particular, is highly symbolic and uses cosmic imagery to convey theological truth about historical events. To read it as a literal, scientific description of future astronomical events is to fundamentally misunderstand the genre and to miss the author's original intent.

Question 67. Are the defining doctrines of Calvinism discoverable by a plain reading of the Bible, or do they require a specific philosophical and theological framework?

Answer 67. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The defining doctrines of Calvinism, particularly the more controversial and philosophically complex tenets of TULIP, are not readily discoverable by a plain, inductive reading of the Bible. A person given a Bible for the first time, with no prior theological training, would be highly unlikely to conclude that Christ's death was only for a select few, or that God's grace is an irresistible force. They would naturally read the

"whosoever" passages as universal, the warnings against apostasy as real, and the commands to choose as genuine. The Calvinistic system requires a **specific philosophical and theological framework** to be brought to the text. It is a product of deductive reasoning, which starts with a central premise—the meticulous, deterministic sovereignty of God—and then interprets all of Scripture through that lens. The doctrines are the logical entailments of the starting premise, not the natural conclusions of a comprehensive, topical study. The very fact that the system requires extensive explanation, the redefinition of common words like "all" and "world," and complex theories like the "two wills" of God, is itself evidence that it is not the plain teaching of Scripture.

Scripture References: (This is an argument about hermeneutics and methodology, not a specific doctrine.)

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to claim that the "plain reading" of the non-Calvinist is a superficial reading that fails to grapple with the "deeper" truths of passages like Romans 9. It is argued that the Calvinistic framework is not imposed upon the text, but is the result of a more profound and theologically astute exegesis. This argument, however, often equates "deeper" with "more philosophically complex." It also assumes that the most difficult and debated passages (like Romans 9) should be the interpretive key for the rest of the Bible, rather than allowing the simple and clear passages to interpret the difficult ones. The biblical principle of clarity (perspicuity) suggests that the central truths of the faith should be accessible to the plain reader, not hidden in complex theological formulations.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The need for a specific interpretive framework is a characteristic of highly systematic theologies. **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)** is a prime example. The system, as developed by **Augustine** and **John Calvin**, is deeply philosophical and requires a significant amount of theological education to defend. This is also true of other complex systems like **Roman Catholicism** (with its synthesis of Scripture, tradition, and Aristotelian philosophy) and **Dispensationalism** (with its intricate charts and dispensational grids). These systems stand in contrast to the simpler, more narrative and less philosophical approach of the **Anabaptist** tradition, which has historically emphasized a more straightforward, literal reading of the teachings of Jesus.

Verses of Apparent Support: (Methodological argument)

Verses of Correction: (Methodological argument)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the Calvinistic reading is a "deeper" reading often commits the **Appeal to Complexity** fallacy. This fallacy assumes that a more complex or difficult-to-understand explanation is more likely to be true. It can be a form of intellectual intimidation, where a position is defended on the grounds that its opponents are simply not intelligent or educated enough to grasp its profound depths. This is often a smokescreen for a lack of clear, simple, biblical evidence. The truth of the gospel is profound, but it is also presented as a simple message that even a child can understand. A system that requires a theological degree to defend should be viewed with suspicion.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **rationalism**, the belief that God's truth can and must be organized into a comprehensive, logically coherent, and non-contradictory human system. This is the driving impulse behind all systematic theology. The goal is to create a perfect, seamless intellectual structure. The Bible, however, is not a book of systematic philosophy. It is a library of inspired texts that reveal God's truth through various genres, often holding profound truths in paradoxical tension. The rationalist impulse seeks to resolve these tensions and eliminate the paradoxes, but in doing so, it often smooths over and distorts the very texture of the biblical revelation itself.

Question 68. How have different Bible translations, based on different manuscript traditions (e.g., Textus Receptus vs. Alexandrian), influenced the interpretation of key verses related to Calvinism?

Answer 68. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): While the major theological debates between Calvinism and Arminianism can be argued from any mainstream Bible translation, the differences between the underlying manuscript traditions do have a subtle but significant influence on the interpretation of key verses. The King James Version is based on the **Textus Receptus** (Received Text), which represents the vast majority of existing Greek manuscripts (the Byzantine text-type). Most modern translations (NIV, ESV, NASB, etc.) are based on the **Alexandrian text-type**, which relies on a few, very old manuscripts like Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. There are thousands of differences between these two text traditions. In some cases, the Alexandrian text omits words, phrases, or even entire verses that are present in the Textus Receptus. While many of these are minor, some can affect theological nuance. For example, some scholars argue that the Alexandrian readings can sometimes weaken the emphasis on human response, the universality of the atonement, or the deity of Christ, thereby making the textual base slightly more favorable to a deterministic or Arian-leaning interpretation. The KJV, based on the Majority Text, often presents a reading that is more robustly supportive of traditional, orthodox theology.

Scripture References: (This is an argument about textual criticism, not a specific doctrine. Examples of variant readings would be cited, e.g., the omission of the end of Mark 16 or the Comma Johanneum in 1 John 5:7 in modern versions.)

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** from modern textual critics is that the Alexandrian manuscripts, while fewer in number, are much older and therefore more likely to be closer to the original autographs. The Byzantine text, they argue, was subject to scribal additions and harmonization over the centuries. This is the central debate in New Testament textual criticism. The counter-argument is that the sheer number and geographical spread of the Byzantine manuscripts suggest they represent the authentic text, and that the Alexandrian manuscripts represent a localized, and sometimes corrupted, text-type from Egypt. The debate is complex, but it is a fact that the textual basis for the KJV is different from that of most modern versions, and this difference can have interpretive implications.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This is not an issue of a specific church teaching a fallacy, but of the academic and publishing consensus that has shaped the Bibles used in most churches today. The shift from the Textus Receptus to the Alexandrian-based Critical Text was driven by the work

of 19th-century scholars like **Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort** (1881). Their theories revolutionized textual criticism and led to the creation of the modern Greek New Testaments that are used by virtually all modern translation committees. This academic consensus is now the standard in almost all **evangelical seminaries and universities**. The **King James Only** movement, found in some **fundamentalist Baptist** circles, is a reactionary response to this shift, though it often relies on poor arguments and a lack of genuine textual scholarship.

Verses of Apparent Support: (Textual argument)

Verses of Correction: (Textual argument)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that "older is always better" when it comes to manuscripts can be a form of the **Appeal to Antiquity** fallacy. While age is an important factor, it is not the only one. A very old manuscript could be a very bad and careless copy, while a later manuscript could be a very careful copy of a much older, now-lost exemplar. Textual criticism involves weighing multiple lines of evidence, including the age, geographical distribution, and internal characteristics of the manuscripts. To base one's entire textual theory on the age of a few manuscripts, while ignoring the overwhelming testimony of the majority, is a methodological oversimplification.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **positivism**, a philosophical approach that places a high value on empirical, "scientific" evidence and is often skeptical of tradition. The Westcott-Hort theory was a product of the 19th-century positivist mindset. It sought to apply "scientific principles" to the biblical text, and it was deeply skeptical of the traditional text that the church had used for centuries. It favored a few "hard," old pieces of evidence (the Alexandrian codices) over the "soft," traditional evidence of the majority of manuscripts. This approach, while appearing objective, can carry its own set of biases and can fail to appreciate the value of a textual tradition that has been preserved and validated by the life of the church over many centuries.

Question 69. What role did the philosophical systems of Stoicism and Manichaeism play in the development of Augustine's theology?

Answer 69. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The philosophical systems of Manichaeism and Stoicism played a profound and demonstrable role in the development of Augustine's later, deterministic theology. Before his conversion to Christianity, Augustine spent nine years as a Manichaean. **Manichaeism** was a dualistic, Gnostic religion that taught a form of absolute fatalism. It believed that humanity was divided into a fixed number of "elect" who had particles of light within them and were destined for salvation, and the "damned" who were made of darkness and were destined for destruction. The parallels to Augustine's later doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation are striking and cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence. Furthermore, the intellectual air of the late Roman Empire was saturated with **Stoicism**, a philosophy that taught that all events are determined by a divine, rational principle (the Logos) or fate. Recent scholarship has shown that Augustine's arguments for determinism, and even his specific terminology, often mirror those of the Stoic philosophers. It appears that Augustine, in his fierce battle against the Pelagians (who overemphasized free will), reached back into the

philosophical arsenal of his pre-Christian past and "baptized" these pagan, fatalistic concepts into his Christian theology, creating a novel system that was a significant departure from the free-will consensus of the first three centuries of the church.

Scripture References: (This is a historical argument, not a doctrinal one derived from specific verses.)

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that these parallels are superficial and that Augustine's doctrines were derived purely from his exegesis of Scripture, particularly the writings of the Apostle Paul. Proponents will claim that Augustine was simply the first to fully understand the "deep" truths of Romans 9. This argument, however, fails to account for the dramatic shift in theology that Augustine represents. Why did no one in the first three centuries see these "deep truths"? And why do Augustine's "biblical" arguments bear such an uncanny resemblance, both in structure and in content, to the pagan philosophical systems with which he was intimately familiar? To dismiss this strong historical and textual evidence as coincidence is an act of historical denialism designed to protect a theological tradition.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: Augustine of Hippo's deterministic theology became the foundation for virtually all of Western theology that followed, including both **Roman Catholicism** and the Protestant Reformation. **John Calvin** (1536) and **Martin Luther** were both deeply Augustinian in their soteriology. Therefore, the philosophical DNA of Manichaeism and Stoic fatalism is embedded within the theological systems of **Lutheran, Reformed, and Presbyterian** churches. The historical research on this topic, particularly the recent, definitive work by scholars like Ken Wilson, presents a profound challenge to the claim that these doctrines are purely biblical in origin.

Verses of Apparent Support: (Historical argument)

Verses of Correction: (Historical argument)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that Augustine's views were derived purely from the Bible, despite the strong philosophical parallels, commits the **Confirmation Bias** fallacy. Confirmation bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms or supports one's preexisting beliefs. Defenders of the Augustinian tradition start with the belief that their doctrines are biblical. When they look at Augustine, they are predisposed to see only the biblical influences and to minimize or dismiss the clear philosophical parallels. They are not weighing all the historical evidence objectively, but are selectively focusing on the evidence that confirms what they already believe to be true.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **theology can be developed in a philosophical vacuum**. This is a naive view of history and intellectual development. No theologian, not even one as brilliant as Augustine, thinks or writes in a vacuum. They are all products of their time, their education, and their intellectual environment. To deny the profound influence of Manichaeism and Stoicism on Augustine's thought is to deny the very nature of how ideas are formed and transmitted. The

historical evidence is clear that Augustine did not simply read his Bible; he read his Bible through the philosophical lens that his life and education had provided him.

Question 70. How does the message of John the Baptist to the nation of Israel serve as a refutation of the core principles of TULIP?

Answer 70. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The fiery, uncompromising message of John the Baptist serves as a concise and devastating, point-by-point refutation of the entire TULIP framework. First, he confronts the "elect" nation of Israel, warning them that their covenant status is not an unconditional guarantee of salvation. His threat that the fruitless tree will be "hewn down" is a direct assault on the doctrine of **Perseverance of the Saints** (the 'P') and, by implication, **Unconditional Election** (the 'U'). Second, his universal and urgent command to "repent ye" is addressed to all who came out to hear him. This command presupposes a will that is not in a state of **Total Inability** (the 'T') to respond. He does not tell them to wait for regeneration; he commands them to act. Third, his call to repentance is a genuine offer of reconciliation, which implies that a way of forgiveness has been provided for all who would repent. This stands against the idea of a **Limited Atonement** (the 'L') that was only for a select few. Finally, the very fact that his call could be, and was, rejected by the religious leaders shows that God's grace is not **Irresistible** (the 'I'). In the opening act of the New Testament drama, John the Baptist lays the axe to the root of the very theological tree that would later be known as Calvinism.

Scripture References: Matthew 3:1-12, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-18

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that John's message was part of the "dispensation of the Law" and that his warnings do not apply to the New Covenant believer. This argument, however, is an artificial division. John is the transitional figure, the bridge between the Old and New Covenants. His message is the preparatory message for the gospel of grace. To dismiss his warnings as belonging to a bygone era is to ignore the continuity of God's principles of judgment. Another **rebuttal** is the standard "No True Scotsman" argument: that the people John was warning were not the "true" elect within Israel, but only false professors. As previously discussed, this is an argument from silence that redefines the subjects of the warning to protect the system.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The full force of John the Baptist's message is often blunted in **Calvinistic churches (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. His sermon must be interpreted in a way that does not violate the five points of the system. Therefore, his warnings are typically applied only to the "non-elect" within the visible covenant community. This contrasts with the **Anabaptist** and **Arminian** traditions, which have long seen John's sermon as a powerful affirmation of the need for a personal, fruit-bearing faith and a clear warning of the possibility of apostasy, even for those within the covenant people of God.

Verses of Apparent Support: (Systemic argument, not based on specific verses to rebut John's message.)

Verses of Correction: Matthew 3:7-10, Luke 3:8-9

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that John's warnings don't apply to the "true elect" commits the **Moving the Goalposts** fallacy. The clear goalpost set by John is that any "tree" (any child of Abraham) that does not bear good fruit will be cut down. When this threatens the doctrine of perseverance, the goalpost is moved. The new argument is that the warning only applies to trees that were never "truly" rooted in the first place. This changes the terms of the warning to make it compatible with the system. It avoids the plain force of the analogy, which is about the outcome of the tree, not its secret, invisible status.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **privileges systematic theology over biblical theology**. Biblical theology seeks to understand the message of each part of the Bible in its own historical and covenantal context. Systematic theology seeks to organize the Bible's teachings into a single, logically coherent system. When the two conflict, the systematic theologian will often reinterpret the biblical text to make it fit the system. The message of John the Baptist, understood in its own context, is a powerful piece of biblical theology that challenges the later, philosophical constructs of the systematic theology known as Calvinism.

The Church and the Christian Life

Question 71. How does one's view of salvation (Calvinist vs. non-Calvinist) impact their approach to evangelism and missions?

Answer 71. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): A person's underlying theology of salvation is the engine that drives their approach to evangelism and missions, profoundly impacting its urgency, its methodology, and its message. The Calvinistic framework, which holds that God has unconditionally elected a fixed number of people to be saved and will draw them irresistibly, logically leads to an approach where evangelism is seen as the God-ordained means to **gather the elect**. The ultimate outcome is already secure in God's decree. While this can produce a patient and confident missionary, it can also diminish the sense of desperate urgency. The non-Calvinist (or Arminian/Wesleyan) framework, in contrast, sees the eternal destiny of every soul as a genuine contingency, dependent on their response to the gospel. This view logically leads to a more **passionate and persuasive** approach to evangelism. The missionary is not simply discovering who is on the list; they are pleading with souls on the precipice of a lost eternity, believing their message and their prayers can genuinely influence the outcome. The message itself also shifts. The Calvinist may emphasize the sovereignty of God in salvation, while the non-Calvinist will almost certainly emphasize the "whosoever will" nature of the invitation and the solemn responsibility of the hearer to choose life.

Scripture References: Romans 10:1, Romans 10:13-15, 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, 2 Corinthians 5:11, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Colossians 1:28-29, 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Jude 1:22-23

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is that their view provides the only real power for missions, because it rests on the certainty of God's sovereign plan, not the fickle will of man. They argue that if salvation ultimately depends on human choice, the missionary can have no real confidence of success. This argument, however, misunderstands the nature of biblical faith. Our confidence is not in the human will, but in the power of the Holy Spirit and the gospel message

to convict and persuade the human will. Another **rebuttal** is that many of the great missionaries in history, like William Carey, were Calvinists. This is true, but it can be argued that they were great missionaries *in spite of* the logical implications of their system, often operating with a practical passion and universal offer that seemed more Arminian in its application than their formal theology would suggest.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This practical difference in evangelistic approach has been a major dividing line throughout modern church history. The **Calvinistic** tradition (**Reformed and Presbyterian**) has produced great theologians and scholars of missions. However, the great, sweeping revival and missionary movements, such as the First and Second Great Awakenings and the rise of modern Pentecostalism, have been almost exclusively driven by an **Arminian/Wesleyan** theology. Figures like **John Wesley** (18th century) and **Charles Finney** (19th century) built their entire evangelistic methodology on the premise that a direct appeal could be made to the human will to make a decision for Christ.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For Calvinistic missions) Acts 13:48, Acts 18:9-10, John 6:37

Verses of Correction: (For Arminian missions) 2 Corinthians 5:20, Romans 10:14, 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, Luke 14:23

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that Calvinism provides the only true confidence for missions can be seen as a **False Dilemma**. It presents only two options: either you have the absolute certainty of a deterministic decree, or you have the utter uncertainty of relying on the unaided human will. It ignores the biblical third option: a confident reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit to work through the faithful preaching of the Word to enable and persuade the human will. Our confidence is not in the decree or in the will, but in the power of the gospel itself.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption about **what constitutes meaningful action**. The deterministic framework can lead to a form of fatalism where human actions, while decreed, are not ultimately decisive. The biblical framework, however, operates on a principle of genuine contingency and instrumental causality. Our prayers and our preaching are the real, God-ordained instruments that He uses to bring about salvation. They are not just a performance of a pre-written script. The philosophical error is to remove the genuine instrumentality of the means of grace, which in turn diminishes the motivation to employ them with passion and urgency.

Question 72. What is the biblical model for church government, and how does it compare to the hierarchical structures often found in denominational churches?

Answer 72. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The biblical model for church government, as revealed in the New Testament, is characterized by its simplicity, its local autonomy, and its servant leadership. The local church is the highest court of authority; there is no scriptural basis for any denominational or hierarchical structure above it. Each local assembly was to be led by a **plurality of elders** (the word for "elder," "bishop/overseer," and "pastor/shepherd" are used interchangeably in the New Testament to refer to the same office). These men were to meet the high moral and spiritual qualifications laid out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Their role was to teach,

shepherd, and govern the local flock. They were assisted in the practical and benevolent work of the church by **deacons**, who also had to meet stringent qualifications. This simple, local, elder-led model stands in stark contrast to the complex, multi-layered, hierarchical structures of most modern denominations, with their popes, cardinals, archbishops, district superintendents, synods, and general assemblies. These corporate-style structures are not found in the biblical blueprint; they are later, man-made inventions that often mirror the political structures of the world rather than the humble, servant-leadership model of Christ and the apostles.

Scripture References: Acts 14:23, Acts 20:17, Acts 20:28, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Hebrews 13:17

Anticipated Rebuttals: A primary **rebuttal** is to point to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 as a model for a broader, hierarchical church authority. This interpretation, however, misunderstands the nature of the event. The Jerusalem Council was a unique, foundational event where the apostles and elders gathered to address a specific, critical doctrinal issue (the question of Gentile circumcision). It was not a standing, legislative body that issued regular decrees to all the churches. It was a case of the daughter churches (like Antioch) seeking the wisdom of the mother church (Jerusalem) where the original apostles resided. It does not provide a warrant for the permanent, extra-local hierarchies that developed centuries later.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: Virtually every major denominational structure is a departure from the simple, local model of the New Testament. **Roman Catholicism** has the most elaborate hierarchy, with the Pope at its head, a structure that developed over many centuries, with the papacy solidifying its power around the 5th and 6th centuries. **Anglicanism and Episcopalianism** have a similar episcopal structure of bishops and archbishops. **Presbyterianism**, developed by **John Calvin** in Geneva in the 16th century, has a more representative, court-like system of presbyteries and general assemblies. Even many **Baptist and Pentecostal** groups, while claiming local church autonomy, have developed powerful denominational conventions and councils that exert significant influence over the local churches.

Verses of Apparent Support: Acts 15:1-31, 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 (regarding collections for other churches)

Verses of Correction: Acts 14:23 ("ordained them elders in every church"), Titus 1:5 ("ordain elders in every city"), 1 Peter 5:2 ("Feed the flock of God which is among you")

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for hierarchical church government often commits the **Fallacy of False Analogy**. It draws an analogy between the leadership structure of Old Testament Israel (with its priests, high priest, and Sanhedrin) or the modern corporate world, and the New Testament church. These are false analogies. The church is explicitly called a "body" and a "family," not a kingdom or a corporation. The principles of leadership that apply to a nation-state or a business are not the same as those that apply to the family of God, which is to be governed by love, humility, and servant leadership, not by top-down, hierarchical power.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **institutional complexity and centralized power are necessary for**

the unity and success of a movement. This is a worldly, political, and sociological assumption. The Bible, however, presents a radically different model. The unity of the early church was not based on an institutional hierarchy, but on a shared faith in the apostolic gospel and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Its success was not due to a centralized strategy, but to the organic, decentralized, Spirit-led witness of local bodies of believers. The philosophical error is to import the world's principles of power and organization into the church, which is meant to be a counter-cultural community operating on the principles of the kingdom of God.

Question 73. According to the New Testament, what is the primary purpose of financial offerings in the church?

Answer 73. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): According to the clear and consistent pattern of the New Testament, the primary purpose of financial offerings in the church was for **benevolence and charity**, specifically the care of the poor and needy within the Christian community. The early church in Jerusalem practiced a radical form of sharing, where believers sold possessions to create a common fund so that "distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (Acts 4:35). The first major administrative crisis and the appointment of deacons was over the "daily ministration" to the Grecian widows (Acts 6). Paul's great collection among the Gentile churches was not for a building fund or for his own salary, but was a relief effort "for the **poor saints which are at Jerusalem**" (Romans 15:26). The collection was a "widow and orphan fund," a practical expression of love for the brethren. This biblical model stands as a stark rebuke to the modern practice where the vast majority of church budgets are consumed by institutional overhead—mortgages, utilities, staff salaries, and program budgets—while the ministry to the poor is often relegated to a small, secondary line item. The New Testament priority was people, not programs or property.

Scripture References: Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32-37, Acts 6:1-6, Acts 11:27-30, Romans 15:25-27, 1 Corinthians 16:1-3, 2 Corinthians 8-9, Galatians 2:10, 1 Timothy 5:3-16

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to cite verses like 1 Timothy 5:17-18 ("Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour... For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn") and 1 Corinthians 9:14 ("Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel") to argue for the legitimacy of paid, professional clergy. While these verses do establish the principle that those who labor in the gospel have a right to receive financial support, the context must be carefully observed. Paul is primarily speaking of traveling apostles and missionaries who have no other means of support. In the case of local elders, Paul himself set the opposite example by working with his own hands as a tentmaker so as not to be a burden to the church. The principle is that support is permissible, but the overwhelming practice and priority of the New Testament was for local elders to be self-supporting and for the church's funds to be directed to the poor.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The modern professionalized, salaried pastorate is the standard model in almost every denomination, including **Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, and non-denominational** churches. This system, however, is a departure from the New Testament pattern. The shift toward a professional, clerical class and the building of dedicated church structures began in earnest in the 3rd and 4th centuries, particularly after the conversion of the

Emperor **Constantine** (c. 312 AD). This led to the development of a church system that mirrored the structure of the Roman state, with a professional, state-supported clergy. This was a major departure from the simple, self-supporting, benevolence-focused house churches of the apostolic era.

Verses of Apparent Support: 1 Timothy 5:17-18, 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, Galatians 6:6

Verses of Correction: Acts 20:33-35, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10, Acts 4:34-35, Romans 15:26

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for the modern church budget model often commits the **Fallacy of False Equivalence**. It equates the New Testament principle that a traveling missionary has a right to support with the modern practice of a full-time, salaried pastorate with benefits, a building mortgage, and extensive program budgets. These two things are not equivalent. The former is a simple provision for the needs of a minister on the road; the latter is a complex institutional and corporate structure. By treating them as the same, the argument uses the biblical support for the former to justify the latter, which has very little, if any, direct biblical precedent.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **the church is an institution that must be managed, rather than an organism that must be nurtured**. This is a corporate or sociological view of the church. In this model, the church needs a CEO (the senior pastor), a board of directors (the elders/deacons), a physical plant (the building), and a budget to run its programs. The Bible, however, presents the church as a family, a body, a flock. In this organic model, the leaders are shepherds, not executives, and the resources are for the care of the family members, not for the maintenance of the institution. The philosophical error is to impose a corporate model onto a community that was designed to be a family.

Question 74. How should believers respond to those who teach a different gospel or a different view of salvation?

Answer 74. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The biblical response to those who teach a different gospel or a fundamentally different view of salvation is not one of dialogue, debate, or ecumenical compromise. The response commanded in Scripture is clear, decisive, and protective: it is **separation**. The Apostle Paul lays down the architectural foundation for this in Galatians 1:8-9: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be **accursed**." This is a solemn, judicial condemnation. He then gives the practical application in Romans 16:17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them** which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and **avoid them**." The Apostle John is even more explicit, forbidding believers from even giving a greeting to a false teacher, "lest ye be partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 1:10-11). This is not an unloving or arrogant response. It is an act of supreme love for Christ and His truth, and a necessary act of protection for the flock of God. The church is to be a pillar and ground of the truth, and that requires guarding the foundation from any who would seek to alter or destroy it.

Scripture References: Galatians 1:6-9, Romans 16:17-18, 2 John 1:9-11, Titus 3:10-11, 2 Timothy 3:5, 1 Timothy 6:3-5

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that this approach is unloving, intolerant, and judgmental. It is argued that we should seek "unity in diversity" and dialogue with those who have different views. This argument, however, confuses unity with doctrinal indifference. The Bible calls for unity based on a shared foundation of truth, not a unity that papers over fundamental disagreements about the gospel itself. To treat a teacher who denies the deity of Christ or salvation by grace alone as a "brother in Christ" is not love; it is a betrayal of Christ. Another **rebuttal** is that we should "win them over" through debate. But Paul instructs Titus that after a first and second admonition, a heretic is to be rejected, knowing that he is "subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." There comes a point where debate is fruitless and separation becomes the only faithful option.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The modern **ecumenical movement**, which seeks organizational unity between denominations with widely divergent gospels (such as Protestantism and Roman Catholicism), stands in direct violation of this biblical command to separate from false gospels. This movement, which gained great momentum in the 20th century with the formation of the **World Council of Churches**, often prioritizes institutional unity over doctrinal truth. Many mainstream **Protestant** denominations (**Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian**) are heavily involved in this movement. This represents a significant departure from the position of the original Protestant Reformers, like **Martin Luther** and **John Calvin**, who, despite their own differences, were united in the belief that the Roman Catholic Church taught a false gospel from which believers must separate.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 17:21 ("that they all may be one"), Ephesians 4:3 ("endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit"), Romans 14:1 (receive him that is weak in the faith)

Verses of Correction: Romans 16:17, Galatians 1:8-9, 2 John 1:10-11, Titus 3:10, 2 Corinthians 6:14-17

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for ecumenical unity with false gospels often commits the **Fallacy of False Equivalence**. It equates the biblical call for unity among genuine believers who may differ on secondary issues (as in Romans 14) with a call for unity with groups that teach a fundamentally different gospel. These are not equivalent situations. Disagreeing about dietary laws is in a different category than disagreeing about whether salvation is by faith alone or by faith plus works. By treating all doctrinal disagreements as if they were of the same level of importance, the argument creates a false equivalence that justifies a level of compromise that the apostles would have condemned.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **relativism**, the belief that there is no objective, absolute truth, particularly in matters of religion. This philosophical mindset, which dominates modern culture, views all doctrinal claims as equally valid "perspectives." It sees the call for doctrinal separation as arrogant and intolerant. The Bible, however, operates on a foundation of **absolutism**. It claims

that there is one God, one Savior, one gospel, and that any deviation from that one true gospel is a damnable lie. The command to separate is not an act of arrogance; it is an act of fidelity to the objective, revealed truth of God.

Question 75. What is the role of "good works" in the life of a believer, and how do they relate to salvation?

Answer 75. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The role of good works in the life of a believer is that of the **necessary and inevitable fruit**, not the saving root. The architectural design of salvation in the New Testament is absolutely clear: we are saved "by grace... through faith... **not of works**, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Our justification, our legal standing before God, is based entirely on the imputed righteousness of Christ, received by faith alone. Good works contribute absolutely nothing to this. However, the very next verse provides the crucial balance: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Genuine, saving faith is a living, dynamic force that inevitably transforms a life. Therefore, good works are the indispensable evidence, the public proof, of an inward, saving faith. As James argues, "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). They are not the cause of our salvation, but they are the necessary characteristic of our salvation. A life that is barren of good works is a life that gives no evidence of having been genuinely saved, calling into question the very reality of the person's profession of faith.

Scripture References: Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 2:14, Titus 3:5-8, James 2:14-26, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 7:16-21, Galatians 5:6, Hebrews 12:14

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** comes from those who misinterpret James 2:24 ("by works a man is justified, and not by faith only") to teach a form of justification by faith plus works. This sets James in direct opposition to Paul. The proper reconciliation is to see that Paul and James are using the word "justify" in two different senses. Paul is using it in its legal, forensic sense: how a person is declared righteous before God (by faith alone). James is using it in its demonstrative sense: how a person's faith is shown or proven to be genuine (by its works). Abraham was justified before God by faith in Genesis 15, long before he offered Isaac on the altar in Genesis 22. His work in Genesis 22 *demonstrated* the reality of the faith he already possessed.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine that good works are meritorious and contribute to a person's justification is a central tenet of **Roman Catholicism**. The **Council of Trent** (1547) explicitly condemned the doctrine of justification by faith alone and declared that a believer's good works, performed in a state of grace, truly merit an increase of grace and eternal life. This creates a "faith plus works" gospel. On the other extreme, some forms of **Free Grace** theology can so radically separate faith from works that they teach a person can be genuinely saved and yet live a life completely devoid of good works or obedience, a view that seems to contradict the clear teaching of James and Jesus Himself.

Verses of Apparent Support: James 2:24, Matthew 19:16-17, Romans 2:6-7, Galatians 5:6

Verses of Correction: Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5, Romans 3:28, Romans 4:4-5, Galatians 2:16

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for justification by faith plus works often commits the **Fallacy of Equivocation** on the word "justify." As explained above, it takes the word "justify" as used by James (meaning "to demonstrate" or "to prove") and assumes it has the same meaning as when used by Paul (meaning "to declare righteous"). By confusing these two distinct uses of the same word, the argument can create the false impression that the Bible contradicts itself or that Paul and James were teaching two different gospels. It's like hearing one person say, "The general was broken (demoted)," and another say, "The vase was broken (shattered)," and then concluding that generals and vases are the same thing.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the relationship between faith and works in a mechanical way rather than an organic way.** The "faith plus works" model sees faith and works as two separate ingredients that must be mixed together in the right proportion to produce salvation. The biblical model is organic. Faith is the living root, and works are the natural, inevitable fruit that grows from that root. You do not tape fruit onto a tree to make it alive; a living tree will naturally produce fruit. In the same way, we do not add works to our faith to be saved; a living faith will naturally produce the fruit of good works.

Question 76. How does the concept of "Christian liberty" apply to matters of conscience and theological disagreement?

Answer 76. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): Christian liberty is the glorious freedom purchased for us by Christ—a freedom from the condemnation of the law, the bondage of sin, and the fear of death. In the practical architecture of the church, this liberty is the very foundation for navigating matters of conscience and non-essential theological disagreements. The Apostle Paul, in Romans 14, provides the divine blueprint. He addresses disagreements over dietary laws and the observance of special days—matters not central to the gospel itself. His ruling is not to enforce a rigid uniformity, but to allow for liberty of conscience: "Let every man be **fully persuaded in his own mind.**" The principle is clear: in non-essential matters, the believer is free to follow their own conscience before God, and we are commanded not to judge or despise our brother who holds a different conviction. However, this liberty is not a license for theological anarchy or an excuse for sin. It is a freedom that must be exercised within two crucial boundaries. First, it must not be used to violate a clear command of Scripture or to cause a brother to stumble. Second, it must always be governed by love. The goal is not to flaunt our freedom, but to use our freedom to "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." In the essentials of the faith, we must have unity. In the non-essentials, we must have liberty. In all things, we must have charity.

Scripture References: Romans 14:1-23, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, 1 Corinthians 10:23-33, Galatians 2:4, Galatians 5:1, Galatians 5:13, James 1:25, 1 Peter 2:16

Anticipated Rebuttals: One **rebuttal** comes from legalists, who argue that this liberty leads to moral laxity and doctrinal compromise. They seek to build fences around the law, creating extra-biblical rules and standards that they then bind on the consciences of others. This is the very error of the Pharisees that Jesus so strongly condemned. On the other extreme, a **rebuttal** comes from the libertine, who uses Christian liberty as a cloak for licentiousness, arguing that since they are

"not under the law," they are free to indulge the flesh. This is the error Paul refutes in Galatians 5:13, warning, "use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Both extremes fail to grasp the biblical balance. Christian liberty is not the freedom to sin, but the freedom to serve God joyfully from a clean conscience, unburdened by the slavish fear of man-made rules.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The error of legalism, which curtails Christian liberty, is found in many forms. It is a hallmark of **Seventh-day Adventism**, with its rigid adherence to the Sabbath and dietary laws. It is also found in many **fundamentalist and Independent Baptist** churches, which often have long lists of extra-biblical prohibitions regarding things like music, dress, and entertainment. The opposite error, libertinism, can be found in some forms of **progressive Christianity**, which can use "grace" and "liberty" to excuse lifestyles and behaviors that are clearly condemned in Scripture. The historical tension between these two errors has been present throughout church history, from the Judaizers in Galatia to the antinomians in Corinth.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For legalism) Matthew 5:19, James 2:10; (For libertinism) Romans 6:14, Galatians 5:1

Verses of Correction: Romans 14:5, Galatians 5:13, 1 Corinthians 8:9, 1 Peter 2:16, Colossians 2:16-23

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The legalist's argument often commits the **Slippery Slope** fallacy. This fallacy argues that if we allow for liberty in one small area, it will inevitably lead to a catastrophic slide into total moral chaos. The argument is, "If you allow someone to listen to contemporary Christian music, the next thing you know they'll be in a nightclub, and then they'll lose their faith entirely." This is a fallacious line of reasoning that fails to recognize that believers, guided by the Holy Spirit and the principles of Scripture, can exercise liberty responsibly without inevitably falling into licentiousness.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views morality in terms of external rules rather than internal principles**. This is a deontological or rule-based ethical framework. It believes that right and wrong are determined by adherence to a set of external regulations. The Bible, particularly the New Testament, presents a virtue-based ethical framework. Morality flows from the internal character of a person who has been transformed by the Holy Spirit. The guiding principle is not a list of rules, but the law of love. Christian liberty operates within this framework of principle-based ethics, not rule-based legalism.

Question 77. What does the Bible teach about the assurance of salvation, and on what basis can a believer have this assurance?

Answer 77. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The Bible teaches that a believer can and should have a deep and abiding assurance of their salvation. This assurance, however, is not a static, one-time event based on a past decision, nor is it a presumptuous confidence in an unconditional decree. Biblical assurance is a living, dynamic confidence that is built upon a three-legged stool, and all three legs are necessary for it to be stable. The first leg is the **objective**,

unshakable testimony of the Word of God. We have assurance because we believe God's promises. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). Our hope is anchored in the finished work of Christ and the reliability of His promises. The second leg is the **internal, subjective witness of the Holy Spirit**. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). This is the inner, intuitive confidence and sense of belonging that the Spirit gives to the child of God. The third leg, and the one most often neglected, is the **external, objective evidence of a transformed life**. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). A life of ongoing obedience and love for the brethren is the necessary, visible proof that our faith is genuine. True, biblical assurance rests securely on all three: God's promise, the Spirit's witness, and a life of fruit.

Scripture References: 1 John 5:13, Romans 8:16, 1 John 2:3-5, 1 John 3:14, 1 John 3:24, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Hebrews 6:11, 2 Peter 1:10, Colossians 2:2

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** from the Calvinistic side is that true assurance can only be based on the unchangeable decree of God's election. They argue that basing assurance on one's works or feelings is unstable and leads to doubt. While it is true that our works do not save us, this argument dismisses the clear teaching of 1 John, which repeatedly points to our obedience and love as the evidence by which we "know" we are saved. On the other extreme, some Arminian views can base assurance almost entirely on a subjective feeling or a past decision, neglecting the need for the ongoing evidence of a transformed life. The biblical model is a balanced one that avoids the presumption of the former and the instability of the latter.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The basis for assurance is a key difference between theological systems. **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)** has historically struggled with the doctrine of assurance. The "practical syllogism" developed by the **Puritans** in the 17th century was an attempt to find assurance by looking for the "marks of grace" in one's life, which often led to crippling introspection and doubt. Some forms of **Free Grace** theology, in contrast, teach that assurance is based solely on believing the facts of the gospel at a single point in time, regardless of one's subsequent life. The balanced, three-legged approach described above is most characteristic of the **Wesleyan** tradition, following **John Wesley** (18th century), who taught that assurance comes from the direct witness of the Spirit, confirmed by the fruit of a holy life.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For decree-based assurance) Romans 8:30, 2 Timothy 1:12; (For decision-based assurance) John 5:24

Verses of Correction: 1 John 5:13, 1 John 2:3, Romans 8:16, 2 Corinthians 13:5, 2 Peter 1:10

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that assurance must be based solely on God's decree or solely on a past decision commits the **False Dilemma** fallacy. It presents an "either-or" choice between two incomplete options. It argues that assurance is either 100% objective (the decree) or 100% subjective (a past decision/feeling). This ignores the biblical model, which is a synthesis of the objective (God's Word), the subjective (the Spirit's witness), and the evidential (a transformed life). It's like arguing that a healthy marriage is based either on the marriage license alone or on

the feelings of the wedding day alone, ignoring the ongoing, daily evidence of a loving and faithful relationship.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **seeks a form of mathematical or philosophical certainty that the Bible does not offer**. This is a rationalistic desire. It wants assurance to be a logical deduction (I believe X, therefore I am saved) or a metaphysical necessity (I am elect, therefore I am saved). The Bible, however, presents assurance in relational terms. It is the confidence that a child has in a loving father, a confidence that is based on the father's promises but is also confirmed by the daily experience of his love and the child's own obedient response. It is a living, breathing confidence, not a sterile, logical deduction.

Question 78. How should a local church practice discipline, especially in cases of serious sin or heresy?

Answer 78. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The practice of church discipline is not an optional program but a necessary architectural feature for maintaining the health, purity, and witness of the local church. The blueprint for this process is laid out with clarity by Jesus in Matthew 18 and applied by the Apostle Paul. The goal is always **redemptive and restorative**, not punitive. For personal sin between members, the process is progressive. First, there is a private confrontation (v. 15). If that fails, one or two witnesses are brought in (v. 16). If that fails, the matter is brought before the whole church (v. 17). If the person refuses to hear the church, they are to be removed from the fellowship, treated as an outsider ("as an heathen man and a publican"). In cases of serious, public, and unrepentant sin that threatens the integrity of the entire community (such as the incestuous relationship in 1 Corinthians 5), or the teaching of damnable heresy, the response is more immediate and decisive. Paul commands the church to **"put away from among yourselves that wicked person"** (1 Corinthians 5:13). This act of excommunication is a solemn, surgical procedure designed to protect the body from the spread of gangrene and to bring the unrepentant sinner to a place of brokenness that might lead to their ultimate restoration.

Scripture References: Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Galatians 6:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, Titus 3:10-11, Romans 16:17

Anticipated Rebuttals: The most common **rebuttal** in the modern church is that church discipline is unloving, judgmental, and contrary to the grace of God. This argument redefines "love" as sentimental tolerance and ignores the biblical understanding of love, which includes correction and discipline. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6). To allow a brother or sister to continue in a destructive sin without confrontation is the most unloving thing a church can do. Another **rebuttal** is that we should "not judge" (Matthew 7:1). This verse is almost always taken out of context. Jesus is condemning hypocritical, self-righteous judgment, not the righteous judgment that is necessary to maintain the standards of the community. In fact, in John 7:24, Jesus commands, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The practice of meaningful church discipline has been almost entirely abandoned in the vast majority of modern **evangelical, charismatic, and mainline Protestant** churches. This is largely due to a cultural shift toward individualism and a fear of

litigation. The "seeker-sensitive" model of the church, which prioritizes attracting and retaining attendees, sees discipline as a major obstacle to growth. This modern neglect stands in stark contrast to the practice of the early church and the Protestant Reformers. Both **John Calvin** in Geneva and the early **Anabaptists** saw the faithful practice of church discipline as one of the essential marks of a true church. The abandonment of this practice is a sign of a deep theological and moral decline in the Western church.

Verses of Apparent Support: Matthew 7:1 ("Judge not"), Luke 6:37, Romans 14:13, Galatians 6:1

Verses of Correction: Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:11-13, Titus 3:10, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, Romans 16:17

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument against church discipline from Matthew 7:1 ("Judge not") commits the **Contextomy** fallacy (quoting out of context). It isolates the first part of the verse while ignoring the rest of Jesus' statement: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged... And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" Jesus is not forbidding all judgment; He is forbidding hypocritical judgment. He is teaching that we must deal with our own sin first before we can see clearly to help our brother with his. The passage is a prerequisite for proper judgment, not a prohibition of it.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **therapeutic individualism**. This is the dominant philosophy of modern Western culture. It views the individual's personal happiness and self-fulfillment as the highest good. In this framework, the church is seen as a voluntary association that exists to meet the individual's felt needs. Any act of corporate discipline that infringes on the individual's autonomy or causes them emotional discomfort is seen as inherently negative and "judgmental." The Bible, however, operates on a foundation of **covenantal communalism**. The church is a body, a family, a holy nation. The purity and health of the community take precedence over the felt needs of the individual. Discipline is not a therapeutic failure; it is a covenantal necessity.

Question 79. What is the relationship between the individual believer's conscience and the authority of the church?

Answer 79. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The relationship between the individual believer's conscience and the authority of the church is one of **respectful submission, but not absolute subjection**. The ultimate authority in the life of the believer is Jesus Christ, speaking in and through His Word. The conscience, when it is clean, informed by Scripture, and illuminated by the Holy Spirit, is the sacred faculty through which a believer discerns and obeys the will of God. The authority of the church and its leaders is a real, God-delegated authority, and believers are commanded to "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves" (Hebrews 13:17). However, this authority is derivative, not ultimate. It is only valid insofar as the church's teaching and commands are in alignment with the Word of God. When the authority of the church comes into conflict with the clear teaching of Scripture, the believer's conscience is bound to obey God rather than men, as the apostles themselves declared before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:29). The

conscience is not a law unto itself, but it is also not the property of the church. It is the sacred ground where the individual soul stands directly before its Creator.

Scripture References: Acts 5:29, Hebrews 13:17, Romans 14:5, Romans 14:23, 1 Corinthians 10:29, 2 Corinthians 1:24, 1 Peter 2:19, Acts 24:16

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** comes from systems with a high view of clerical authority, which argue that the individual's conscience must be submitted to the interpretive authority of the church. It is argued that "private interpretation" leads to chaos and that the church has been given the authority to bind the conscience of its members. This view, however, can lead to spiritual tyranny and can compel believers to violate their conscience in the name of submission. On the other extreme, some argue for a radical individualism where the conscience is the only authority, and the church has no right to speak into a believer's life. This ignores the clear biblical commands to submit to and obey our leaders. The biblical balance is that the conscience is supreme, but it must be a conscience that is itself submitted to the Word of God and is willing to be taught and corrected by the leaders of the church.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrine of absolute submission of the conscience to the church is a cornerstone of **Roman Catholicism**. The Magisterium (the teaching authority of the Pope and bishops) is held to be the infallible interpreter of Scripture, and the individual Catholic is required to give "religious submission of mind and will" to its teachings. This was a primary point of contention during the Protestant Reformation. **Martin Luther**, at the **Diet of Worms (1521)**, famously declared, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God... to go against conscience is neither right nor safe." This declaration established the Protestant principle of the supremacy of the individual conscience when it is bound by Scripture. Some high-church **Anglican** and **Orthodox** traditions also hold a very high view of church authority over the individual conscience.

Verses of Apparent Support: Hebrews 13:17, Matthew 18:17-18, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

Verses of Correction: Acts 5:29, Acts 17:11, Galatians 1:8, 1 Peter 5:3, 2 Corinthians 1:24

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for the absolute authority of the church over the conscience often commits the **Appeal to Authority** fallacy. It argues that a position is true simply because an authority (the church, the Pope, the pastor) says it is true. It short-circuits the process of personal study, discernment, and conviction. While it is good and right to respect and learn from God-given authorities, our ultimate reason for believing something must be that it is taught in the Word of God, not simply that a person or institution has declared it to be so. The Bereans are commended not for their blind submission, but for their noble-minded critical engagement with the apostle's teaching.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **collectivism**, the idea that the group is more important than the individual. In this philosophical framework, the individual conscience must be subsumed for the good and unity of the collective institution. The Bible, however, presents a profound respect for the individual. While it has a high view of the community (the church), it never sacrifices the

individual on the altar of the institution. Salvation is individual. Our standing before the judgment seat of Christ is individual. The relationship between the soul and its God is intensely personal. The church exists to nurture that individual relationship, not to usurp it.

Question 80. How can believers from different theological perspectives maintain unity and fellowship in the body of Christ?

Answer 80. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): Believers from different theological perspectives can and must maintain unity and fellowship by building on the right foundation and by correctly distinguishing the architectural load-bearing walls from the cosmetic, decorative features of the faith. The foundation of all true Christian unity is not a shared denominational label or a perfectly aligned systematic theology, but a shared faith in the **essential, non-negotiable truths of the gospel**. These are the great, central pillars of the faith: the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His substitutionary death on the cross for our sins, His bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and the truth that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. On these foundational truths, there can be no compromise. This is the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" for which we must earnestly contend. However, on secondary and tertiary doctrines—such as the precise timing of the rapture, the mode of baptism, the exact mechanics of divine sovereignty, or the style of worship music—we must exercise the "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." The biblical model for unity is found in Ephesians 4:1-3: "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This unity is not something we create, but something the Spirit has already created, and which we are called to maintain through "lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

Scripture References: Ephesians 4:1-6, Romans 14:1, Romans 15:7, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Philippians 1:27, Philippians 2:1-4, Colossians 3:12-15

Anticipated Rebuttals: One **rebuttal** is that doctrinal purity requires separation even on secondary issues. This is the argument of the schismatic, who believes that their particular understanding of every fine point of theology is essential. This often leads to endless division and the creation of micro-denominations, a practice Paul condemned in Corinth. On the other extreme is the ecumenist, who argues that unity requires us to overlook even essential gospel truths for the sake of institutional fellowship. This leads to a false unity that is not based on the truth of Christ. The biblical path is the narrow road between these two errors: a fierce commitment to the essentials of the gospel, coupled with a gracious and charitable liberty in the non-essentials.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The error of schism over non-essentials is a particular problem in some **Independent Fundamental Baptist** and **Landmark Baptist** circles, which can often divide over very minor points of doctrine or practice. The opposite error of a false ecumenism is prevalent in many **mainline Protestant** denominations (**United Methodist, ELCA Lutheran, PCUSA Presbyterian**) and is the driving force behind the **World Council of Churches**, which often promotes a form of unity that sacrifices core biblical doctrines on the altar of social and political cooperation. This movement, which gained prominence in the 20th century, stands in contrast to the Reformation principle of unity based on a shared confession of the gospel.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For schism) Romans 16:17, 2 John 1:10; (For false ecumenism) John 17:21

Verses of Correction: Ephesians 4:1-3, Romans 14:1-5, Philippians 2:1-4, 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument of the schismatic often commits the **Fallacy of False Equivalence**. It treats all doctrines as if they were of equal importance. It equates a disagreement over a secondary issue (like eschatology) with a disagreement over a primary issue (like the deity of Christ) and calls for the same level of separation for both. This is a failure to distinguish between different categories of theological truth. It's like a doctor treating a common cold with the same radical surgery used to treat a malignant tumor. The treatment must be appropriate to the severity of the illness.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **sectarianism**, the belief that one's own group possesses the complete and total truth, and that all other groups are in significant error. This philosophical mindset is rooted in pride and an inability to recognize that no single individual or group has a perfect understanding of the infinite mind of God. The biblical worldview, in contrast, calls for intellectual humility. While we must be firm on the clear, central truths of the gospel, we must also acknowledge that on secondary matters, we "see through a glass, darkly." This humility is the very soil in which true, charitable unity can grow.

Challenging Key Calvinist Proof Texts

Question 81. In Romans 9, is Paul discussing individual salvation or God's sovereign purposes in the history of redemption through Israel?

Answer 81. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): A careful architectural analysis of Romans 9 reveals that its primary subject matter is not a timeless, abstract blueprint for individual salvation and damnation. Rather, it is a deeply contextual, historical argument about **God's sovereign purposes as they are worked out through the nation of Israel** in the grand sweep of redemptive history. The chapter opens with Paul's intense sorrow for his "kinsmen according to the flesh," the Israelites. The question that drives the entire argument is this: Has the Word of God failed because the chosen nation has, for the most part, rejected its Messiah? Paul's answer is a resounding "No." He demonstrates that God's purpose has never been tied to mere physical lineage, but has always been based on His sovereign choice. The examples he uses—Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau—are not about who goes to heaven, but about who would carry the covenant promise and the Messianic line. His example of Pharaoh is not about an eternal decree of damnation, but about God's sovereign right to use a rebellious world leader to display His power and advance His redemptive plan. The entire chapter is a theodicy, a defense of God's faithfulness to Israel in light of the surprising and glorious inclusion of the Gentiles. To rip these verses out of this rich, salvation-historical soil and plant them in the thin, philosophical soil of individual predestination is to do a grave injustice to the apostle's argument.

Scripture References: Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-4, Romans 11:1-2, Genesis 17:19-21, Genesis 25:23, Malachi 1:2-3, Exodus 9:16-17

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to insist that while the context is indeed national, the principles of divine sovereignty revealed are universally applicable to individuals. The argument is that the way God sovereignly chose Jacob over Esau for historical purposes is a "case study" that reveals the way He sovereignly chooses individuals for eternal salvation. This argument, however, makes an unwarranted logical leap. It assumes that God's methodology is uniform across different categories of action. But God's choice of a nation for a specific, temporary, historical role is not in the same category as His offer of eternal salvation to all individuals. Furthermore, if the analogy were followed consistently, it would undermine Calvinism. Esau was not eternally damned; he was blessed and became the father of a great nation. The hardening of Israel is not final; Paul spends all of Romans 11 explaining how they can be grafted back in. The examples do not support the doctrine of unconditional, eternal reprobation.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The decontextualized, individualistic interpretation of Romans 9 is the absolute bedrock of **Calvinistic** soteriology. It is the central pillar in the systems of **Augustine** and **John Calvin**, and it is the primary text appealed to in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches to defend the doctrine of Unconditional Election and Reprobation. Without this specific interpretation of Romans 9, the entire TULIP system would be left without its most powerful and explicit biblical support. This interpretation is a defining feature of the Reformed tradition and a major point of departure from the **Arminian/Wesleyan** and **Anabaptist** traditions.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:11-13, Romans 9:15-18, Romans 9:21-23

Verses of Correction: Romans 9:1-5 (establishes the context as national Israel), Romans 9:30-32 (attributes Israel's failure to their own unbelief, not a decree), Romans 10:13 ("whosoever"), Romans 11:23 (proves the "hardening" is not final)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The individualistic interpretation of Romans 9 commits the **Fallacy of Composition**. This fallacy occurs when one assumes that what is true of the parts must be true of the whole, or in this case, that the principles governing the whole (God's sovereign plan for nations in history) must be identical to the principles governing the parts (the eternal destiny of every individual). Paul is painting on a grand, historical canvas, and the argument zooms in on a few brushstrokes and misinterprets them as a detailed portrait of individual metaphysics. The fallacy is in confusing the scale and the subject of the argument.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **privileges metaphysics over history**. This is a philosophical bias that seeks timeless, abstract, universal principles rather than engaging with the concrete, particular, historical narrative of the text. It wants Romans 9 to be a chapter of systematic theology about the eternal decrees of God. The Bible, however, presents it as a chapter of redemptive history about the faithfulness of God to His covenant people. The philosophical error is to de-historicize the text, stripping it of its narrative context in order to turn it into a set of abstract, philosophical propositions.

Question 82. In John 6:44 ("No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him"), does the word "draw" imply an irresistible force, or a wooing and enabling?

Answer 82. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The word "draw" in John 6:44, while powerful, does not imply an irresistible, coercive force that violates the human will. A careful architectural study of the word's usage and its context reveals it to be a **powerful, persuasive, and enabling wooing**. The Greek word is *helkuo*. While it can be used for a forceful dragging (as in dragging a net), this is not its only meaning, and the context must be our guide. The most important contextual key is provided by Jesus Himself in the same Gospel. In John 12:32, Jesus says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will **draw** [*helkuo*] **all men** unto me." Since it is a fact that not all men are saved, this "drawing" cannot be irresistible. It must refer to the universal, moral, and spiritual attraction of the cross. Therefore, the drawing of the Father in John 6:44 is best understood as the essential, divine initiative that overcomes spiritual inability and makes it possible for a person to come to Christ. It is the life-giving summons of the gospel, empowered by the Holy Spirit, that awakens the soul and enables it to respond. It is a drawing that can be, and tragically is, resisted by a rebellious will.

Scripture References: John 6:44, John 12:32, Song of Solomon 1:4 ("Draw me, we will run after thee"), Jeremiah 31:3 ("with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"), Acts 7:51

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to insist on the most forceful meaning of *helkuo*, arguing that it always implies a resistance that is overcome. Proponents will dismiss the use in John 12:32 as a different kind of "general" drawing, while the drawing in John 6:44 is a "special, effectual" drawing. This is the classic "two calls" theory, which is a theological construct with no direct textual support. It is an ad hoc explanation created to resolve the contradiction that the system creates. The simpler, more consistent interpretation is that there is one gospel drawing, which is powerful and universal in its sufficiency, but which is not coercive.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of "draw" as an irresistible force is a cornerstone of **Calvinistic** theology. It is the primary proof text for the doctrine of Irresistible Grace (the 'I' in TULIP). This view, taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches, is a logical necessity of the system developed by **Augustine and Calvin**. If man is totally unable, then the grace that draws him must be irresistible. This interpretation is a major point of contention with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** tradition, which sees the drawing as a universal, enabling, but resistible grace.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 6:37, John 6:44, John 6:65

Verses of Correction: John 12:32, Acts 7:51, Matthew 23:37, John 5:40

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that "draw" in John 6:44 must mean an irresistible force commits the **Fallacy of Inconsistent Application**. It insists on the most forceful possible meaning of the word in this one verse, while conveniently ignoring another use of the very same word by the very same speaker in the very same book (John 12:32) where that forceful meaning is impossible. This is an inconsistent and self-serving hermeneutic. It's like arguing that the word "run" always means "to move at a fast pace," and then, when confronted with the phrase "my nose is running," refusing to adjust the definition.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views divine influence in mechanistic terms rather than personal terms**. The deterministic model thinks of the soul as an object that is moved by forces. If the divine force is greater than the soul's inertia, the soul moves. The Bible, however, presents a personal and relational model. The Father does not "drag" a person to the Son like a magnet dragging a piece of metal. He "draws" them with the "cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea 11:4). It is the wooing of a lover, the call of a father, the persuasion of a king. It is a personal, relational influence, not an impersonal, mechanical force.

Question 83. In Acts 13:48 ("as many as were ordained to eternal life believed"), does "ordained" refer to a pre-temporal decree or a present disposition of the heart?

Answer 83. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The word "ordained" in Acts 13:48, a key proof text for the doctrine of unconditional election, is best understood not as a reference to a secret, pre-temporal, fatalistic decree, but as a description of the **present disposition of the hearts** of the Gentile hearers. The Greek word is *tasso*, and while it can mean "appointed," its primary range of meaning has to do with being "arranged, ordered, or disposed." The context of the passage is a contrast. The envious, blaspheming Jews had just "judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life" (v. 46). In stark contrast, the Gentiles "were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord," and as many as were *disposed* or *arrayed* for eternal life believed. The verb is in the passive or middle voice, which can suggest that they "set themselves in order" or "were disposed" for eternal life. It describes a receptive posture, a heart that had been prepared by the Spirit's prior work to receive the gospel with joy. It is not describing a list of names written in a decree from eternity past, but the present, spiritual condition of a group of people who were ready to embrace the truth they were hearing.

Scripture References: Acts 13:46-48, Luke 7:29-30, 1 Corinthians 16:15, Romans 13:1

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to insist that *tasso* in this context must refer to a divine, sovereign appointment, and that any other interpretation is an attempt to read human free will into the text. Proponents will point to other uses of the word that refer to an appointment to an office or a station. However, the meaning of a word is always determined by its context. In this context of conversion and response to the gospel, the meaning of a "disposition" or "inclination" fits perfectly with the narrative flow and with the broader biblical teaching on faith as a response to the hearing of the Word. To insist on the strongest possible deterministic meaning is to force the text to conform to a preconceived system.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of "ordained" as an eternal, unconditional decree of election is a cornerstone of **Calvinistic** theology. It is one of the most frequently cited proof texts for the 'U' (Unconditional Election) in TULIP and is central to the teaching of **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This interpretation, which became standard after **John Calvin**, is necessary to support the idea that faith is the result of election, rather than the condition for it. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** interpretation, which sees the word as describing a Spirit-prepared, receptive heart, and was a view held by many of the early Greek-speaking church fathers.

Verses of Apparent Support: Acts 13:48, Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 1:4-5

Verses of Correction: Acts 13:46 ("judged yourselves unworthy"), John 3:19 ("men loved darkness"), Matthew 13:15 ("their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed")

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that "ordained" must mean a pre-temporal decree commits the **Fallacy of the Excluded Middle** (a form of false dilemma). It presents only two options: either the people believed because of their own unaided free will (Pelagianism), or they believed because they were unconditionally decreed to do so from eternity (Calvinism). It excludes the biblical **middle ground**: that they believed because the Holy Spirit had graciously worked in their hearts to make them receptive and well-disposed to the gospel they were hearing, enabling them to make a genuine faith response.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views salvation in terms of a secret, hidden decree rather than a public, proclaimed message**. The deterministic model makes the hidden, eternal decree the ultimate reality and the cause of salvation. The preaching of the gospel is merely the means by which this decree is brought to pass in time. The biblical model, however, makes the proclaimed Word the central, life-giving event. Salvation comes through the hearing of the Word and the response of faith. The focus is on the public, historical event of the gospel encounter, not on a secret, metaphysical decree.

Question 84. When Jesus says, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me" (John 17:9), is He speaking about the scope of His atonement or the specific focus of His high priestly prayer?

Answer 84. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): When Jesus prays, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me," He is speaking with absolute clarity about the **specific focus of His High Priestly prayer**, not about the intended scope of His atoning sacrifice. The entire chapter of John 17 is the "Holy of Holies" of the New Testament, an intimate, sacred moment where the Son is speaking to the Father on the eve of His crucifixion. His immediate concern in this prayer is for the protection, sanctification, and unity of His disciples—the "ones thou hast given me" who were with Him in the room—and for all future believers who would come to faith through their message. It is the prayer of a shepherd for his specific flock. To take this intensely personal, pastoral prayer and use it as a theological sledgehammer to limit the scope of the atonement is a profound act of decontextualization. The same apostle who recorded this prayer also wrote that Jesus is the "propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the **sins of the whole world**" (1 John 2:2). A specific prayer for a specific group does not and cannot negate the universal provision of His sacrifice.

Scripture References: John 17:9, John 17:20-21, 1 John 2:2, John 3:16-17, John 4:42, 1 Timothy 2:4-6

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that the group for whom Jesus prays (the elect) is the same group for whom He died. The argument is that His work of intercession and His work of atonement must be coextensive. If He only intercedes for the elect, He must have only

atoned for the elect. This argument, however, is a logical inference, not a direct statement of Scripture. It assumes a neat, systematic consistency that the Bible does not always provide. It is entirely possible for Christ to have made a universal provision in His death, while focusing His specific High Priestly intercession on those who have received that provision by faith. A lawyer can pay a debt sufficient to free every prisoner in a jail, while focusing his specific legal counsel only on those who have accepted his services.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This verse is one of the primary proof texts for the doctrine of Limited Atonement as taught in **Calvinistic** churches (**Reformed and Presbyterian**). The system developed by **John Calvin** requires that all of Christ's saving benefits—including His atonement and His intercession—be limited exclusively to the elect. Therefore, John 17:9 is interpreted as a definitive statement on the particularity of the atonement. This interpretation is a cornerstone of the Reformed tradition and was a key point of debate at the **Synod of Dort** (1619) against the Arminians, who argued that the verse must be understood in its immediate, pastoral context.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 17:9, John 10:11, John 10:15, Ephesians 5:25

Verses of Correction: 1 John 2:2, John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:6, Hebrews 2:9, 2 Corinthians 5:19

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that this verse limits the atonement commits the **Fallacy of Hasty Generalization**. It takes a specific, particular statement made in a very specific context (a prayer for His disciples) and generalizes it into a universal, absolute principle that governs the entire scope of Christ's atoning work. It fails to consider the broader testimony of Scripture, which speaks in universal terms about the atonement. It's like hearing a father say a prayer at the dinner table, "God, please bless my wife and children," and then concluding that this man has no love or concern for anyone else in the world.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **God's actions must be understood in terms of a strict, logical economy**. This is a philosophical bias that values tidiness and efficiency. It assumes that it would be "inefficient" or "illogical" for Christ to die for those who will not be saved. Therefore, His prayer, His death, and His election must all have a one-to-one correspondence. The Bible, however, presents a God of extravagant, and sometimes seemingly "wasteful," grace. He sends the rain on the just and the unjust. The sower casts the seed on all kinds of ground, even the ground where it will not bear fruit. The God of the Bible is not a divine accountant ensuring a perfectly balanced ledger; He is a lavishly generous King whose grace overflows the neat and tidy boundaries of human logic.

Question 85. In Ephesians 1:4-5, are believers chosen "in him" before the foundation of the world for salvation, or for the purpose of being holy and blameless?

Answer 85. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): A careful architectural reading of Ephesians 1:4-5 reveals that the focus of our predestination is not the initial act of salvation, but the **glorious purpose and outcome** of that salvation. The text says that God "hath chosen us **in him** before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.**" The purpose of the choice is explicitly stated: our sanctification. The next verse continues this thought,

stating that He has "predestinated us unto the **adoption of children**." Again, the focus is on our new status and relationship as sons of God. The key phrase is "in him." The election is not of individuals *to be put into* Christ, but of a corporate body of people who are found "in Christ." God's eternal plan was to have a holy and blameless family, and He determined that all who are united to His Son by faith would be part of that family. The predestination is about the destination of the train, not about which specific passengers are forced to get on board. It is God's eternal purpose for the Church, the body of Christ.

Scripture References: Ephesians 1:4-5, Romans 8:29, 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 1:1-2, 1 Peter 1:2

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that this is a distinction without a difference. It is argued that if God chose us for the purpose of being holy, He must have also chosen us for the salvation that makes that holiness possible. This argument, however, collapses the different elements of God's plan into a single, deterministic decree. The Bible allows for a more nuanced view. God can set the terms of the covenant (all who are in Christ will be adopted and made holy) without predetermining who will meet those terms by faith. The choice is to be "in Christ." All who make that choice, enabled by grace, enter into the blessings that God predestined for those who would be in His Son.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of this passage as teaching the unconditional election of individuals to salvation is a cornerstone of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. The system developed by **John Calvin** sees this verse as a clear statement of God's pre-temporal, sovereign choice of specific individuals for salvation. This interpretation is necessary to support the 'U' in TULIP. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which sees the election as being conditional upon foreseen faith, and the **corporate election** view (common among many Anabaptists and some modern New Testament scholars), which sees the passage as describing God's choice of the Church as a body, not specific individuals.

Verses of Apparent Support: Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:11, Romans 8:29-30

Verses of Correction: (The same verses, read in their corporate and purposeful context, provide the correction.) Ephesians 1:4 ("that we should be holy"), Ephesians 1:5 ("unto the adoption of children"), Romans 8:29 ("to be conformed to the image of his Son")

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The individualistic, deterministic interpretation of this passage often commits the **Fallacy of Misplaced Precision**. It takes the general, glorious language of God's eternal purpose for His people and tries to turn it into a precise, metaphysical blueprint for the eternal destiny of every single individual. It imposes a level of systematic, individualistic precision onto a text that is written in the soaring, doxological language of corporate praise. It's like analyzing a beautiful, epic poem about a nation's destiny and trying to turn it into a detailed census report of every single citizen.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views election in individualistic and atomistic terms**. This is a modern, Western philosophical bias. The Bible, particularly the writings of Paul, is deeply corporate and covenantal. Paul is almost always thinking in terms of the body, the community, the

"us." The idea of God's plan is primarily about His purpose for His people, the Church. The individual finds their place within that corporate plan. The philosophical error is to reverse this, starting with the abstract, eternal decree for the individual and then seeing the church as merely the sum total of those decreed individuals.

Question 86. How should we understand the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" and "vessels of mercy" in Romans 9:22-23?

Answer 86. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy" in Romans 9 must be understood within the chapter's controlling context of God's sovereign dealings with **nations and groups in history**, not as a description of God's eternal, unconditional predestination of individuals to heaven or hell. The "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" refer to those, like Pharaoh or the unbelieving portion of national Israel, who through their own persistent pride and rebellion, make themselves ripe for God's judgment. It is critically important to note the voice of the verb: the Greek for "fitted" is in the middle or passive voice, which strongly suggests that they **fitted themselves** for destruction. Their condition is a result of their own actions. In contrast, the "vessels of mercy" are those whom God "had **afore prepared** unto glory." Here, the verb is active. God is the one who actively prepares the vessels of mercy, which in this context are the believing remnant of Israel and the believing Gentiles who are being called into the church. The passage is not about God creating some people for the express purpose of damning them. It is about God's patience with the self-hardening vessels of wrath, and His active, gracious preparation of the vessels of mercy to display the riches of His glory.

Scripture References: Romans 9:17-24, Jeremiah 18:1-10, 2 Timothy 2:20-21, 1 Peter 2:8, Proverbs 16:4

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to insist that the potter has absolute power over the clay and that the distinction in the voice of the verb ("fitted" vs. "prepared") is a minor grammatical point that should not override the clear statement of God's sovereign power. This argument, however, minimizes a crucial detail of the text. The Holy Spirit inspired the precise grammar of the text for a reason. The difference between the passive/middle voice for the vessels of wrath and the active voice for the vessels of mercy is a profound theological statement about responsibility. It attributes the state of the vessels of wrath to themselves, and the state of the vessels of mercy to God's grace. To ignore this is to flatten the text to make it fit a deterministic system.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of the "vessels of wrath" as individuals unconditionally and eternally predestined to damnation is a central and terrifying component of **high-Calvinism**. This doctrine of reprobation, taught by **Augustine** and **John Calvin**, and solidified in confessions like the **Westminster Confession of Faith** (1646), is seen as a necessary corollary to the doctrine of unconditional election. It is taught in many **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This interpretation is rejected by **Arminians, Wesleyans, and Anabaptists** as a monstrous doctrine that maligns the character of God and contradicts His revealed desire for all to be saved.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:21-23, Proverbs 16:4, 1 Peter 2:8, Jude 1:4

Verses of Correction: Romans 9:22 (the passive/middle voice of "fitted"), Jeremiah 18:6-10 (the potter analogy in context, where the clay's fate is conditional), 2 Timothy 2:21 ("If a man therefore purge himself... he shall be a vessel unto honour"), 2 Peter 3:9

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for unconditional reprobation from this text often commits the **Fallacy of Slothful Induction**. This fallacy occurs when a person ignores relevant evidence and details that would undermine their conclusion. In this case, the crucial grammatical detail of the passive/middle voice of the verb "fitted" is ignored because it complicates the deterministic interpretation. A proper induction would take all the details of the text into account and build a conclusion that can explain them all. The slothful induction simply ignores the inconvenient details to arrive at a preconceived conclusion more easily.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views God's glory in terms of a display of raw power rather than as a display of righteous character**. The deterministic model sees the ultimate purpose of the vessels of wrath as a demonstration of God's sovereign power to do as He pleases. The Bible, however, presents God's glory as the manifestation of His holy, just, and merciful character. He is glorified in judging the vessels of wrath not because He decreed their rebellion, but because His judgment upon their self-chosen rebellion is perfectly just. He is glorified in saving the vessels of mercy because His grace is perfectly merciful. The focus is on the glory of His character, not the glory of His power.

Question 87. Does Philippians 2:13 ("For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure") negate the role of human choice and effort?

Answer 87. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The glorious declaration of Philippians 2:13 does not negate the role of human choice and effort; it is the very **foundation that makes human choice and effort possible and effective**. The verse cannot be architecturally separated from the command that immediately precedes it: **"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you..."** The word "For" is the divine hinge that connects the two clauses. It means "because." We are commanded to work, precisely *because* God is the one who is at work within us. This is not a contradiction; it is a divine synergy. God's internal work of grace—giving us the desire ("to will") and the power ("to do")—is the necessary prerequisite for our external work of obedience. The verse does not teach a divine monergism where the believer is a passive puppet. It teaches a divine-human cooperation where God's sovereign grace enables and empowers our responsible, diligent effort. It is a call to active, strenuous partnership with the God who is graciously at work in our hearts.

Scripture References: Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Colossians 1:29, Hebrews 13:20-21

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** from the deterministic side is to argue that God's work is the ultimate and determining cause, and our "working" is merely the inevitable effect of His irresistible grace. In this view, our effort is not a genuine, cooperative contribution, but simply the necessary outworking of God's prior, determinative work. This interpretation, however, diminishes the force of the command to "work out" our salvation "with fear and trembling." If the

outcome is already guaranteed and our effort is merely a predetermined effect, why the call for fear and trembling? The language suggests a real, ongoing struggle that requires our diligent participation, not a passive submission to an irresistible force.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of this verse as teaching divine monergism (God working alone) is central to **Calvinistic** theology. The system of **Augustine and Calvin** requires that God be the sole, determining agent in salvation and sanctification. Therefore, any human effort must be seen as the effect, not a cooperative cause, of God's work. This is taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view of "synergism," which sees this verse as a prime example of God's grace and human free will working together in the process of salvation and sanctification.

Verses of Apparent Support: Philippians 2:13, John 6:44, Romans 9:16, Ephesians 2:8-9

Verses of Correction: Philippians 2:12, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 2 Peter 1:10, Hebrews 12:14

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The monergistic interpretation of this passage can be seen as a **Fallacy of Composition**. It assumes that because God is the ultimate and primary cause of our sanctification, He must be the *only* cause. It fails to allow for the biblical category of secondary, cooperative causation. It's like looking at a beautiful garden and saying, "The sun is the ultimate cause of this garden's growth, therefore the gardener's work of planting, watering, and weeding is not a real cause at all." The reality is that both the sun and the gardener are real causes, working together to produce the final result.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views the relationship between divine and human agency as a zero-sum game**. This philosophical model assumes that for every degree of agency attributed to humanity, a corresponding degree of agency must be subtracted from God. To give God 100% of the glory, man's contribution must be reduced to 0%. The Bible, however, presents a different model. God is most glorified not by our passivity, but by our active, joyful, Spirit-empowered cooperation with His grace. His power is made perfect in our weakness, and His glory is magnified when we, as His co-laborers, bear much fruit.

Question 88. In John 10:26, does Jesus say that people do not believe because they are not His sheep, or that they are not His sheep because they do not believe?

Answer 88. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): A careful examination of the grammar and the immediate context of John 10:26 reveals that Jesus is stating that the people's **unbelief is the very evidence** that proves they are not His sheep. He says, "But ye believe not, **because** ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." The word "because" points to the reason for their unbelief. What is the defining characteristic of His sheep? He immediately clarifies in the next verse: "My sheep **hear my voice**, and I know them, and they **follow me**." Therefore, being one of His sheep is not a secret, pre-temporal, metaphysical status. It is a present, relational reality defined by the actions of hearing and following. The reason the Pharisees do not believe is that they are not in this relationship; they are not hearing and following. Their unbelief is the proof of their non-sheep status. To reverse the logic and say that they are *unable* to believe *because* they were not pre-

selected as sheep is to import a deterministic framework that the text itself does not require. The statement is a description of their present, rebellious condition, not a declaration of a past, fatalistic decree.

Scripture References: John 10:26-27, John 8:47, John 5:38-40, John 3:19-20

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is to take the verse at what they see as its plain, causal sense: the state of "not being a sheep" is the cause of the action of "not believing." They argue that this is a clear statement that the status of election precedes and determines the response of faith. This interpretation, however, creates a tension with the immediate context, where the status of being a sheep is defined by the actions of hearing and following. The more consistent reading is that the two statements are mutually interpreting. They are not His sheep *because* they do not believe, and they do not believe *because* they are not His sheep. It is a description of a single, unified state of rebellion, not a metaphysical cause-and-effect sequence.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of this verse as teaching that a pre-ordained elect status is the cause of faith is a standard teaching in **Calvinistic** circles (**Reformed and Presbyterian**). This is a key proof text for the doctrine of Unconditional Election. The system developed by **John Calvin** requires that election be the cause, and faith the effect. Therefore, this verse is interpreted through that deterministic grid. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which would see the verse as a description of the Pharisees' present state of willful rejection of Jesus's voice, which is the very thing that defines them as not being His sheep.

Verses of Apparent Support: John 10:26, John 6:37, John 6:65, Acts 13:48

Verses of Correction: John 10:27 ("My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me"), John 8:47 ("He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God"), John 5:40 ("ye will not come to me")

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The deterministic interpretation of this verse can be seen as a **Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc** fallacy (after this, therefore because of this), though applied to a state rather than an event. It assumes a specific and unproven causal relationship. The argument is: "A person must be a sheep before they can believe. These people do not believe. Therefore, it is because they are not sheep." It assumes the very causal link it is trying to prove. The text itself simply states a correlation: the state of not being a sheep and the action of not believing are present together. The more biblically consistent view is that the willful action of not believing is what defines the state of not being a sheep.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views personal identity in terms of a static, essential property rather than a dynamic, relational reality**. This is a philosophical bias toward essentialism. It sees "being a sheep" as a fixed, metaphysical essence that is implanted in a person from eternity. The Bible, however, presents identity in more relational and functional terms. You *are* what you *do*. You are a sheep if you hear and follow the Shepherd. You are a child of God if you do the will of the Father. The philosophical error is to reverse this, arguing that you do what you do because of what you essentially are, which leads to a deterministic and fatalistic view of human identity.

Question 89. How does the immediate context of Romans 3:10-18 ("There is none righteous, no, not one") inform our understanding of its application to all of humanity?

Answer 89. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The immediate context of Paul's catena of Old Testament quotations in Romans 3:10-18 is a legal argument designed to prove the **universal guilt of all humanity**, both Jew and Gentile, before the righteous bar of God's law. His purpose is to demonstrate, beyond any doubt, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (v. 23) and that, therefore, "by the deeds of the law there shall **no flesh be justified** in his sight" (v. 20). The passage is a masterful diagnosis of the human condition, a declaration of our universal legal condemnation. It is not, however, a clinical definition of our metaphysical incapacity. To take this passage, which is about our universal guilt, and use it as a proof text for the doctrine of "Total Inability"—the idea that no unregenerate person is able to seek God or respond to His grace—is to press the text beyond its intended purpose. The passage describes what man *does* in his fallen state (he does not seek God), not what he is *incapable* of doing when confronted by the drawing power of the gospel. It establishes our desperate need for a Savior; it does not define the mechanics of how we respond to that Savior.

Scripture References: Romans 3:9-23, Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 53:1-3, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Galatians 3:22

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is to argue that the description of man's actions ("none that seeketh after God") is a direct result of his inherent nature and inability. The argument is that the reason no one seeks is because no one *can* seek. This is a logical inference, but it is not what the text itself explicitly states. The text is a description of behavior, not a definition of capacity. Furthermore, this interpretation must then ignore other scriptures where God commands men to seek Him (Isaiah 55:6) and where it is said that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6), which would be meaningless commands if seeking were impossible.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This passage is a foundational proof text for the doctrine of Total Depravity (the 'T' in TULIP) as taught in **Calvinistic churches (Reformed and Presbyterian)**. The system developed by **Augustine and Calvin** requires a doctrine of absolute inability, and this passage is interpreted as providing the definitive biblical support for it. This interpretation is central to the Reformed tradition. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which agrees that the passage teaches the universal depravity and guilt of man, but does not agree that it teaches an absolute inability to respond to God's prevenient grace.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 3:10-18, Jeremiah 17:9, Ephesians 2:1-3, 1 Corinthians 2:14

Verses of Correction: Acts 17:27 ("That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him"), Hebrews 11:6, Isaiah 55:6, Deuteronomy 4:29

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that this passage teaches total inability commits the **Fallacy of the Single Cause**. It takes the complex reality of human sinfulness and reduces it to a single, metaphysical cause: inability. It ignores the other causes that the Bible gives for why men do not seek God: they love darkness (John 3:19), their hearts are hardened, they are blinded by the

god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), and they are rebellious. By oversimplifying the problem and reducing it to a single cause, the argument creates a neat philosophical point but loses the multifaceted, moral, and spiritual complexity of the biblical diagnosis.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **confuses a universal description with a metaphysical definition**. This is a category error. The passage in Romans 3 is a powerful, poetic, and universal description of human behavior in a fallen state. The deterministic interpretation takes this description and turns it into a rigid, metaphysical definition of human nature's essential capacities. It's like reading a report that says, "In this impoverished country, there are none that eat a balanced meal," and then concluding that the people are metaphysically incapable of digesting a balanced meal. The description of their condition is not a definition of their constitution.

Question 90. When the Bible speaks of God "hardening" hearts, does it mean that He actively creates unbelief, or that He gives people over to their own rebellious choices?

Answer 90. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): When the Bible speaks of God "hardening" a heart, it is describing a solemn, judicial act of God, but not an act where He creates evil or unbelief from scratch. The consistent architectural pattern of Scripture shows that divine hardening is a **reactive judgment**, a consequence that follows persistent human rebellion. The classic case is Pharaoh, where the text reveals a dynamic interplay. The Bible says that "Pharaoh **hardened his heart**" (Exodus 8:15, 32), and it also says that "the LORD **hardened the heart of Pharaoh**" (Exodus 9:12). This is not a contradiction. The process begins with Pharaoh's own prideful, self-willed rebellion. In response to this established pattern of defiance, God acts judicially to confirm and solidify the hardness that Pharaoh himself has chosen. It is the act of giving a rebel over to his rebellion. It is a withdrawal of restraining mercy that allows the sin already present to become fully entrenched. This same principle is seen in Romans 1, where God "gave them up" to their sins *because* they first refused to glorify Him. God does not infuse the poison of unbelief; He judicially allows the self-chosen poison to run its fatal course.

Scripture References: Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:32, Exodus 9:34, 1 Samuel 6:6, Exodus 9:12, Exodus 10:20, Romans 9:18, Isaiah 6:9-10, John 12:40, Romans 1:24-28, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** from the deterministic side is to focus solely on Romans 9:18, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," and to argue that this demonstrates a purely sovereign and unconditional act of God. This interpretation, however, ignores the vast Old Testament context (particularly the story of Pharaoh) that informs Paul's statement. It also ignores the clear statements where Pharaoh is said to harden his own heart. A topical study requires that all the evidence be harmonized, and when it is, the pattern of reactive, judicial hardening becomes clear. The argument from Romans 9 isolates the verse from its narrative and theological background to make it support a preconceived system.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The interpretation of hardening as a direct, unconditional, and sometimes proactive decree of God is a necessary component of **hyper-Calvinism**. This view, taught in some **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches, sees the hardening of the reprobate as the

direct outworking of God's eternal decree, just as the salvation of the elect is. This flows from the systems of **Augustine and Calvin**, which prioritize meticulous divine sovereignty. This contrasts with the **Arminian/Wesleyan** view, which has consistently taught that hardening is a divine judgment that follows and confirms a person's own willful and persistent rejection of grace.

Verses of Apparent Support: Romans 9:17-18, Exodus 4:21, Exodus 7:3, John 12:40

Verses of Correction: Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:32, 1 Samuel 6:6, Hebrews 3:8-13, Psalm 95:8, Romans 1:21-24

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument for unconditional hardening commits the **Fallacy of Suppressed Evidence**. It consistently highlights the verses where God is the active agent in hardening, while systematically ignoring or downplaying the significance of the parallel verses where the human individual is the active agent. By presenting only one side of the textual evidence, it creates a distorted and imbalanced conclusion. An honest presentation would acknowledge the full dynamic and seek to harmonize both sets of data, which leads to the conclusion of a reactive, judicial hardening rather than a proactive, unconditional one.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views causality in simplistic, unilateral terms**. This philosophical bias assumes that for any event, there must be a single, ultimate, determining cause. It struggles with the biblical concept of complex, concurrent agency, where both God and human beings can be said to be real actors in the same event. The hardening of Pharaoh is a prime example of this concurrent agency. The philosophical error is to reduce this complex, personal, and judicial interaction to a simple, unilateral, deterministic act, which sacrifices the biblical nuance for the sake of a tidier, but less accurate, philosophical system.

Synthesis and Conclusion

Question 91. After examining all the relevant scriptures, can the five points of TULIP be harmonized with the entirety of biblical teaching?

Answer 91. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): After a thorough and comprehensive architectural examination of the entirety of biblical teaching, the five points of TULIP, as a systematic and interdependent framework, **cannot be harmonized** with the full counsel of God's Word. While each of the five points touches on a biblical theme—depravity, election, atonement, grace, and perseverance—the specific, rigid, and deterministic formulation of each point within the TULIP system creates a structure that is in direct conflict with vast and vital sections of Scripture. The system requires one to believe in a Total Inability that renders the Bible's universal commands to repent and believe nonsensical. It requires an Unconditional Election that contradicts the Bible's clear teaching on God's universal love and His character as "no respecter of persons." It requires a Limited Atonement that makes the "whosoever will" invitations of the gospel seem insincere. It requires an Irresistible Grace that is directly refuted by biblical accounts of the Holy Spirit being resisted. And it requires a Perseverance of the Saints that nullifies the dozens of solemn warnings to believers about the real danger of falling away. TULIP is a logically coherent

philosophical system, but it is a house built by **cherry-picking** certain biblical stones while discarding others. It is not the house that the full biblical blueprint describes.

Scripture References: (This is a summary argument, referencing the entire body of Scripture. Key anti-TULIP texts include John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2, Acts 7:51, Matthew 23:37, Hebrews 6:4-6, and Exodus 32:33.)

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that the non-Calvinist view fails to do justice to the "hard sayings" of Scripture, particularly Romans 9, and that it ultimately elevates the will of man over the sovereignty of God. This argument, however, is based on a false dilemma. The biblical alternative to Calvinism is not Pelagianism (which elevates the will of man). The biblical alternative is a theology that holds God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in the paradoxical tension that Scripture itself presents. It argues that the Calvinistic interpretation of the "hard sayings" is a misinterpretation that ignores their historical and covenantal context. The goal is not to diminish God's sovereignty, but to define it according to the full testimony of Scripture, which reveals a sovereignty that is exercised in a way that is consistent with God's other revealed attributes of love, justice, and truthfulness.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The TULIP framework is the definitive summary of the soteriology of **Calvinism**, as taught in **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. It was codified at the **Synod of Dort** (1619) as a direct response to the Five Articles of the Remonstrants (the followers of Arminius). While its roots are in the theology of **Augustine and Calvin**, the TULIP acronym itself is a later, more rigid expression of the system. The vast majority of Christendom, including **Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and the Arminian/Wesleyan/Anabaptist** traditions, has historically rejected this five-point system as an imbalanced and unbiblical formulation of the doctrine of salvation.

Verses of Apparent Support: (The entire collection of proof texts for each of the five points.)

Verses of Correction: (The entire collection of verses that challenge each of the five points.)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: As a whole system, TULIP is built upon the **Begging the Question** fallacy (circular reasoning). The system's conclusion (that God unconditionally and deterministically saves the elect) is assumed in its interpretation of the evidence. Each point logically requires the others. You only need Limited Atonement if you have Unconditional Election. You only need Irresistible Grace if you have Total Inability. The system is a closed, circular loop that interprets the Bible through its own lens. The premise and the conclusion are the same, and the argument simply moves in a circle, using each point to prove the others.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **rationalism**, the belief that the truths of God must be reducible to a logically exhaustive and coherent human system. The TULIP framework is the pinnacle of theological rationalism. It is a beautiful, internally consistent, logical machine. Its primary weakness, however, is that it sacrifices the messy, paradoxical, and profoundly relational data of the biblical text for the sake of its own logical tidiness. The Bible is not a book of systematic theology; it is the story of God's relationship with humanity. The philosophical error is to prioritize

the creation of a neat system over a faithful submission to the full, and sometimes paradoxical, testimony of the text.

Question 92. What are the most significant points of tension between the Calvinistic system and a plain reading of the Bible?

Answer 92. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The most significant points of tension between the Calvinistic system and a plain, untutored reading of the Bible arise where the system's logical deductions collide with the Bible's direct, relational statements about the **character of God and the nature of the gospel offer**. First, a plain reader would see the universal language of John 3:16 ("God so loved the world"), 1 Timothy 2:4 ("will have all men to be saved"), and 1 John 2:2 ("propitiation... for the sins of the whole world") and naturally conclude that God's love and Christ's atonement are for everyone. The system's doctrines of a selective love and a limited atonement are in stark tension with this. Second, a plain reader would hear the universal commands to "repent" and "choose life" and the "whosoever will" invitations and naturally conclude that a genuine choice is being offered. The system's doctrines of total inability and irresistible grace create a deep tension with this. Third, a plain reader would encounter the dozens of solemn warnings to believers about falling away and the possibility of being "cut off" or "blotted out" and naturally conclude that perseverance is a real and necessary condition of salvation. The system's doctrine of unconditional security is in direct tension with these warnings. In each case, the plain reading leads to a relational, dynamic, and conditional understanding, while the system requires a metaphysical, deterministic, and unconditional one.

Scripture References: (Universal Atonement) 1 John 2:2; (Universal Offer) Revelation 22:17; (Resistible Grace) Acts 7:51; (Conditional Security) Hebrews 6:4-6

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that the "plain reading" is a superficial reading that fails to account for the "deeper" truths of divine sovereignty found in passages like Romans 9. It is argued that the plain reading leads to contradictions (if God loves everyone, why aren't all saved?), and that the Calvinistic system, while more complex, is the only way to resolve these contradictions in a way that truly honors God's sovereignty. This argument, however, assumes that God's sovereignty must be defined in a deterministic way, and it dismisses the possibility that the Bible intentionally holds these truths in a paradoxical tension that our finite logic cannot fully resolve. It mistakes a philosophical tidiness for biblical truth.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: These points of tension are the historical dividing lines between **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)** and the rest of Christendom. The system, as developed by **Augustine and Calvin**, consistently prioritizes the logical deductions from the doctrine of meticulous sovereignty over the plain, relational statements of the biblical text. This has been the central critique of the system by **Arminians, Wesleyans, Lutherans, Anabaptists, and the Eastern Orthodox** for centuries. They argue that Calvinism sacrifices the revealed character of God for the sake of a philosophical model of sovereignty.

Verses of Apparent Support: (The standard proof texts for TULIP.)

Verses of Correction: (The standard counter-texts for TULIP.)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The defense of the Calvinistic system against the "plain reading" often commits the **Appeal to Motive** fallacy. It can subtly or overtly suggest that those who hold to the "plain reading" do so because of a sinful, humanistic desire to preserve their own autonomy or to create a God in their own image. It attacks the supposed motive of the opponent rather than engaging with the textual evidence they present. For example, "You only reject unconditional election because you want to take some of the credit for your salvation." This is a fallacious argument that avoids the hard work of exegesis by impugning the character of the interlocutor.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **a theological system should be judged by its internal logical consistency rather than its external correspondence to the full range of biblical data.** This is a philosophical position known as coherentism. The TULIP system is highly coherent; each point logically flows from the others. The problem is that this internally coherent system does not correspond well with all the data of the biblical text. The biblical worldview requires a correspondence theory of truth, where our beliefs must correspond to the reality revealed in the text, even if that reality is not as logically tidy or systematic as we would like.

Question 93. How does the "either-or logical fallacy" contribute to the debate between Calvinism and other theological systems?

Answer 93. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The "either-or logical fallacy," also known as the **False Dilemma**, is the very architectural foundation upon which the entire debate between Calvinism and other systems is built. The debate is almost always framed in a series of false dichotomies. You are forced to choose: **Either God is 100% sovereign, or man has free will.** Either salvation is 100% by God's grace, or it is by human works. Either believers are eternally secure, or they can lose their salvation at any moment. In each case, two positions are presented as the only exhaustive options, and the debaters retreat to their respective corners to defend one pole against the other. The Bible, however, consistently rejects these man-made, philosophical "either-ors" and presents a "both-and" reality. It teaches that God is 100% sovereign *and* that man is 100% responsible. It teaches that salvation is 100% by grace *and* that a genuine faith response is 100% necessary. It teaches that God's keeping power is absolute *and* that a believer must diligently persevere. The fallacy is in the framing of the question. By accepting the false choice, both sides are forced into imbalanced positions that must ignore or explain away a significant portion of the biblical evidence. The truly biblical position is to reject the false dilemma and to embrace the profound, paradoxical tension that the Scripture itself holds together.

Scripture References: Philippians 2:12-13 (A classic "both-and" passage: "work out your own salvation... For it is God which worketh in you")

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** from both sides is that a "both-and" position is an illogical, irrational compromise. The staunch Calvinist will argue that if man has any decisive choice, God cannot be truly sovereign. The staunch Arminian will argue that if God is truly sovereign in a deterministic sense, man cannot have any meaningful choice. Both sides are committed to the idea that the relationship must be logically comprehensible and that one principle must have ultimate priority over the other. They are uncomfortable with a divine mystery that

transcends the law of non-contradiction as understood by finite human minds. They demand a logical tidiness that the Bible does not provide.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This fallacious "either-or" framing is the very engine of the historical debate between **Calvinism** and **Arminianism**. The entire controversy, which erupted in the early 17th century and was adjudicated at the **Synod of Dort**, was framed in these binary terms. This has created a polarized theological landscape in Protestantism for 400 years. Some traditions, like **Lutheranism**, have attempted to find a middle path (affirming monergism in conversion but allowing for the possibility of falling from grace), but the broader evangelical world is still largely defined by this Calvinist/Arminian dichotomy, which is itself based on a logical fallacy.

Verses of Apparent Support: (Each side uses its standard proof texts to defend its pole of the dichotomy.)

Verses of Correction: (Passages that hold both truths in tension, like Philippians 2:12-13, Acts 2:23, and Genesis 50:20.)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The **False Dilemma** is the central fallacy at play. It is the tactical error of presenting only two choices when more are available. It's like saying, "This car is either blue or red," when it is, in fact, purple. The biblical view of salvation is a rich, complex "purple" that combines the "blue" of divine sovereignty with the "red" of human responsibility. The fallacy is in refusing to see the color purple because you are dogmatically committed to a world that contains only blue and red.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **bivalence**, a principle of classical logic which states that every proposition is either true or false, and there is no third option. While this is a useful principle in formal logic, it can be misapplied to the complex, paradoxical, and personal truths of divine revelation. The Bible often presents truths that are not "either/or" but "both/and." The relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility may be one of these areas where our binary logic is insufficient to grasp the transcendent reality. The philosophical error is to insist that the reality of God must conform to the logical principle of bivalence.

Question 94. What is the "story of the blind men and the elephant," and how does it illustrate the danger of building a theology on incomplete evidence?

Answer 94. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The ancient parable of the blind men and the elephant is a perfect illustration of the architectural folly of building a theological system on incomplete, "cherry-picked" evidence. In the story, a group of blind men encounter an elephant for the first time. One touches the leg and declares, "An elephant is like a tree." Another touches the trunk and insists, "No, it is like a snake." A third touches the tail and argues, "You are both wrong; it is like a rope." Each man is correct in his limited experience, but all of them are profoundly wrong in their overall conclusion because they have only grasped one part of the whole reality. This is precisely the error of systematic theologies like Calvinism. The Calvinist has firmly grasped one part of the elephant—the massive, strong leg of God's sovereignty—and has declared that the entire elephant is like a tree. He has built his entire system around this one, undeniable truth. In

doing so, however, he has missed the flexible trunk of God's universal offer, the guiding tail of God's moral law, and the hearing ears of God's responsiveness to prayer. A true, topical Bible study is the act of walking around the entire elephant, of patiently examining every part, and of humbly admitting that the whole is far greater and more complex than any one part would suggest.

Scripture References: (This is an illustrative parable, not a biblical doctrine.)

Anticipated Rebuttals: A proponent of a system might rebut this analogy by claiming that their chosen part of the elephant (e.g., sovereignty) is, in fact, the most important or foundational part, and that all the other parts must be understood in light of it. This is simply a restatement of their commitment to the cherry-picking fallacy. It is an assertion of a biased starting point, not an argument from the evidence as a whole. Another **rebuttal** might be that it is impossible for finite humans to grasp the whole elephant, so we must be content with our partial understanding. While it is true that we cannot fully comprehend God, this should lead to intellectual humility and a cautious, balanced approach, not to the arrogant construction of a comprehensive system based on one's own preferred part of the evidence.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: This parable illustrates the methodological error of virtually every rigid theological system. **Calvinism** focuses on sovereignty. **Arminianism** can focus so heavily on free will that it can seem to diminish God's power. Some **Pentecostal** and **Charismatic** groups can focus so intensely on the work of the Holy Spirit that they neglect sound doctrine and the centrality of the Word. **Liberal Christianity** can focus on the love of God to the exclusion of His holiness and justice. Each group has grasped a real truth, but has often mistaken that part for the whole, leading to an imbalanced and distorted theological system.

Verses of Apparent Support: (Illustrative parable)

Verses of Correction: (Illustrative parable)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The parable of the blind men and the elephant is a perfect illustration of the **Hasty Generalization** fallacy. This fallacy is committed when a conclusion is drawn about a whole group or concept based on an inadequate or biased sample. Each blind man makes a hasty generalization about the entire elephant based on his sample size of one part. In the same way, a theological system makes a hasty generalization about the entire character and plan of God based on a biased sample of texts that support its central premise.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **reductionism**. Reductionism is the philosophical approach that seeks to understand complex things by reducing them to the interactions of their simpler parts. While this is a powerful tool in the natural sciences, it can be a dangerous error when applied to personal and transcendent realities like God. A reductionist approach to God will always fail because God is not a complex machine that can be disassembled and understood. He is an infinite, personal being who must be known through relationship and revelation. The attempt to create a systematic theology is often a reductionist project, an attempt to make the infinite God of the Bible fit into the finite categories of a human system.

Question 95. What is the central, unifying message of the Bible regarding God's plan of salvation for humanity?

Answer 95. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The central, unifying architectural theme of the entire Bible, the great redemptive story from Genesis to Revelation, is that God, out of His infinite and unmerited love for a rebellious and fallen humanity, has executed a glorious plan to **reconcile all things to Himself through the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ**. This is not a story of a secret plan to rescue a few, but a cosmic plan to defeat sin, death, and Satan, and to create a new heavens and a new earth. The plan is introduced in seed form in the promise of Genesis 3:15, it is developed through the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David, it is foretold in stunning detail by the prophets, it is accomplished in the historical events of Christ's incarnation, sinless life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection, it is proclaimed by the apostles to all nations, and it will be consummated in the triumphant return of Christ and the establishment of His eternal kingdom. The gateway into this great salvation has always been the same: **by grace, through faith**. It is a plan that is vast enough to include "whosoever will," yet personal enough to call each of us by name. This grand, Christ-centered, universal offer of reconciliation is the scarlet thread that ties the entire biblical narrative together.

Scripture References: Genesis 3:15, John 3:16, Acts 4:12, Romans 5:8-10, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Galatians 4:4-5, Ephesians 1:7-10, Colossians 1:19-22, Hebrews 9:26-28, Revelation 21:1-5

Anticipated Rebuttals: There are few direct **rebuttals** to this central message, as it is the common confession of orthodox Christianity. The disagreements arise in the details of its application. A Calvinist would agree with this summary, but would add that God's plan also included the unconditional election of those who would be saved. An Arminian would agree, but would emphasize the role of free will in accepting the offer. A Roman Catholic would agree, but would add the instrumental role of the church and its sacraments. While these are significant differences, they are debates about the *application* of the plan, not about the central, Christ-centered nature of the plan itself. The unifying message is Christ, and it is in the details of how His salvation is applied that the divisions arise.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: While most churches would affirm this central message, the error comes when a denomination's particular distinctives are elevated to the same level of importance as the central message itself. For example, when a church like the **Seventh-day Adventists** makes the Sabbath a central, defining issue of the "everlasting gospel," or when a **Church of Christ** makes a specific mode of baptism the primary point of fellowship, they risk obscuring the central, unifying message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. The tragedy of denominationalism is the tendency to turn secondary issues into primary ones, creating walls where there should be fellowship.

Verses of Apparent Support: (This is a summary of the central message of the entire Bible.)

Verses of Correction: (This is a summary of the central message of the entire Bible.)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The error of elevating a secondary doctrine to the level of a primary one is a form of the **Fallacy of Misplaced Emphasis**. It involves focusing on a minor or secondary

aspect of an issue while ignoring or downplaying the major and more important aspects. It's like a building inspector who writes a scathing report about a smudge on a window while completely ignoring the fact that the building's foundation is crumbling. Many theological debates are arguments about the smudges on the windows, while the great, central, unifying foundation of the gospel is neglected.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **sectarianism**. This is the philosophical and sociological tendency of human groups to define themselves by what makes them different from other groups. Denominations are often formed and maintained by emphasizing their unique "distinctives." This is a natural human tendency, but it is contrary to the spirit of the gospel, which seeks to break down walls of division. The biblical worldview is not sectarian; it is catholic (in the sense of "universal"). It calls us to find our primary identity not in our denominational distinctives, but in our shared union with Christ, which transcends all human labels.

Question 96. How does a proper understanding of the Book of Life provide a key to resolving the debate over election and perseverance?

Answer 96. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): A proper, architectural understanding of the biblical doctrine of the Book of Life provides a powerful and elegant key that unlocks the long-standing debate over election and perseverance. The critical insight, which is consistently ignored by deterministic systems, is that the Bible's primary emphasis is not on names being added to the book, but on the solemn possibility of names being **blotted out**. This single fact reframes the entire discussion. It suggests a model that is both gracious and conditional. **The Model:** God, in His universal love and foreknowledge, and based on the sufficient sacrifice of the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world," wrote every name in His book from the beginning. This affirms a universal, gracious election and provision. However, a person's place in that book is not unconditional. It is maintained through a living, persevering faith in Christ. Through final, unrepentant sin and apostasy, a person can forfeit their place, and their name is then blotted out. This model perfectly harmonizes the Bible's teachings on God's sovereign initiative, His universal love, the security of the true believer, and the many solemn warnings about falling away. It resolves the debate not by choosing one set of verses over another, but by providing a framework in which both sets of verses can be understood in perfect harmony.

Scripture References: Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 22:19, Daniel 12:1, Philippians 4:3, Luke 10:20

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary Calvinistic **rebuttal** is the "two books" theory, which posits that the "Book of Life" from which names can be blotted out is a temporary register of the living, while the "Lamb's Book of Life" is a separate, eternal, and unchangeable list of the elect. This distinction, however, is an artificial construct that is not explicitly made in Scripture. The Bible uses the terms in a way that suggests they are one and the same record of eternal salvation. The other **rebuttal** is that the warnings are hypothetical. As discussed before, this undermines the integrity of God's Word. The doctrine of the Book of Life, when taken at face value, provides a clear and powerful alternative to the rigidities of the Calvinistic system.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The doctrines of Unconditional Election and the Perseverance of the Saints are central pillars of **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)**. The system, as developed by **Augustine and Calvin**, requires the list of the saved to be eternally fixed and unchangeable. Therefore, the biblical doctrine of the Book of Life, with its clear teaching on the possibility of names being blotted out, presents a direct and severe challenge that must be neutralized by extra-biblical explanations like the "two books" theory. This stands in contrast to the view of many early church fathers and later **Anabaptists and Arminians**, who saw this doctrine as a clear support for conditional security.

Verses of Apparent Support: Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8 (These are interpreted by Calvinists to mean the names of the elect were written, and the non-elect were not.)

Verses of Correction: Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 22:19, Psalm 69:28

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The "two books" theory is a classic example of the **Ad Hoc Rescue** fallacy. The original belief ("the list of the saved is unchangeable") is contradicted by the evidence (names can be blotted out). To save the belief, a new, unsupported element is invented ("there must be a second, different book"). This new element is created "for this" specific purpose—to rescue the theory. It is an argument that lacks intellectual honesty because it refuses to allow the evidence to challenge the original belief and instead invents new conditions to protect it.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **static essentialism**. This philosophical view believes that things have a fixed, unchangeable essence. In this case, a person is either "elect" or "non-elect" in their essential being from eternity, and this status cannot change. The biblical doctrine of the Book of Life, however, operates on a more dynamic, **relational and covenantal** model. A person's standing before God is not a fixed, metaphysical property, but a living, relational state that must be maintained. The philosophical error is to impose a static, essentialist grid onto a dynamic, relational reality.

Question 97. What are the practical implications of adopting a Calvinistic worldview for one's personal relationship with God?

Answer 97. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): Adopting a Calvinistic worldview can have profound and often detrimental practical implications for a believer's personal relationship with God. While the system's intention may be to glorify God's sovereignty, its logical outworking can create a relationship characterized by **anxiety, distance, and a diminished sense of personal agency**. First, the doctrine of unconditional election can lead to a crippling lack of assurance. Instead of simply trusting in Christ's universal promises, the individual can be driven to an unhealthy, introspective search for the "marks" of their own election, forever asking, "Am I truly one of the chosen?" Second, the doctrine of reprobation can create a view of God that is terrifying and seemingly arbitrary, making it difficult to relate to Him as a consistently loving and trustworthy Father. How can one fully trust a God who may have created their neighbor or even their own child for the express purpose of damnation? Third, the doctrines of irresistible grace and perseverance can lead to a spiritual passivity, a sense that one's own striving, prayer, and diligent effort are ultimately not decisive. It can replace the dynamic, relational struggle of the Christian

walk with a more fatalistic sense of simply being carried along by an irresistible decree. While many Calvinists are devout and loving Christians, the internal logic of their system can create significant pastoral and relational problems.

Scripture References: (This question is about the practical implications of a system, not a specific doctrine derived from verses.)

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that these are misrepresentations or abuses of the system. It is argued that a "proper" understanding of Calvinism leads to the deepest humility, the greatest assurance (based on God's decree, not our feelings), and the most fervent holiness (out of gratitude). While it is true that the system can be held in a more balanced way, this **rebuttal** fails to account for the consistent historical and pastoral problems that have arisen from it. The intense struggles with assurance among the Puritans, for example, are a matter of historical record. The argument also fails to address the core logical and emotional difficulties of relating to a God who has unconditionally decreed the eternal torment of millions.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: These practical implications are a recurring theme in the history of **Calvinism**. The intense focus on introspection and the "marks of grace" was a hallmark of 17th-century **Puritanism** in England and America. The potential for a "cold" or "intellectual" faith, detached from passionate evangelism, has been a criticism leveled against some **Reformed and Presbyterian** churches. In contrast, the **Wesleyan** revival of the 18th century, with its emphasis on a universal atonement, a personal experience of the witness of the Spirit, and the possibility of a joyful assurance of salvation for all, was a direct and powerful reaction against what **John Wesley** saw as the pastoral dangers of the Calvinistic system.

Verses of Apparent Support: (Systemic argument)

Verses of Correction: (Systemic argument)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The defense of Calvinism against these practical critiques often commits the **No True Scotsman** fallacy. The argument is, "No *true* Calvinist would lack assurance or be cold in their faith." When presented with historical or personal examples of Calvinists who do struggle with these issues, the response is, "Well, they must not have a *proper* or *balanced* understanding of the system." This fallacy protects the system from any practical critique by simply redefining the subject ("true Calvinist") to exclude all negative examples. It makes the system's practical benefits unfalsifiable.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **a theological system's logical coherence is more important than its relational and pastoral livability**. This is a rationalistic bias. The system is seen as a beautiful, logical machine, and if its operation causes some relational or emotional problems for the people inside it, then the problem is with the people, not with the machine. The biblical worldview, however, is profoundly pastoral and relational. Biblical doctrine is not given to us to build elegant, abstract systems, but to bring us into a living, healthy, and joyful relationship with the living God. A system that, in practice, often hinders that relationship should be viewed with great suspicion.

Question 98. How can a topical Bible study method help to cut through the complexities and contradictions of different theological systems?

Answer 98. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): A topical Bible study method is the master architect's single most powerful tool for cutting through the dense forest of human theological systems and clearing a straight path to the truth of God's Word. Its power lies in its radical simplicity and its unwavering commitment to a single authority: the Bible itself. Instead of starting with a man-made system (like TULIP or the Westminster Confession) and then searching for verses to support it, the topical method begins with a blank slate. It asks a simple question: "What does the **entire Bible** have to say about this subject?" By gathering every relevant verse on a topic—grace, election, law, etc.—and laying them all out side-by-side, the student forces Scripture to interpret Scripture. This process naturally and automatically **exposes the imbalances and contradictions** of the man-made systems. It becomes immediately obvious when a system has been "cherry-picking" its evidence, because the verses that the system ignores are now sitting on the table, demanding to be heard. It bypasses centuries of confusing philosophical debate and denominational tradition, empowering any believer to build their convictions directly on the solid rock of the whole counsel of God, rather than the shifting sands of human reasoning.

Scripture References: Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Proverbs 2:1-6, Psalm 119:105

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** is that the topical method is simplistic and can be easily misused by the untrained layman to rip verses out of context. It is argued that a proper understanding requires the guidance of historical theology and the complex exegesis of trained scholars. While it is true that any method can be misused, the danger of taking verses out of context is far greater in a systematic approach that is actively searching for "proof texts" to support a preconceived idea. The topical method, when done honestly, actually *forces* verses into their broader context by placing them alongside all the other verses on the same topic. It is the best defense against a narrow, decontextualized reading. The claim that it is "simplistic" is not a weakness, but its greatest strength.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The topical Bible study method is a threat to any theological system that relies on a high degree of clerical or academic authority. **Roman Catholicism**, with its insistence on the Magisterium as the sole infallible interpreter of Scripture, would naturally oppose a method that empowers the laity to interpret for themselves. Similarly, highly academic forms of **Calvinism** or **Lutheranism**, which rely on a deep knowledge of historical confessions and systematic theology, can be suspicious of a method that seems to bypass this scholarly tradition. The method has been most at home in movements that emphasize the priesthood of all believers and the perspicuity (clarity) of Scripture, such as the **Anabaptist** tradition and many grassroots **evangelical** and **Bible church** movements.

Verses of Apparent Support: (Methodological argument)

Verses of Correction: (Methodological argument)

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that the topical method is dangerous for the laity commits the **Appeal to Authority** fallacy (specifically, an appeal to an elite or expert authority). It argues that the method is flawed because it does not rely on the approved interpretations of a special class of people (scholars, theologians, clergy). It seeks to invalidate the method not by showing its inherent flaws, but by claiming that only the experts are qualified to interpret the Bible correctly. This is a form of spiritual elitism that is contrary to the Protestant principle of the perspicuity of Scripture.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **Gnosticism**. Gnosticism was an ancient heresy that taught that salvation comes through a secret, hidden knowledge (*gnosis*) that is only available to a select, initiated elite. The argument against the topical method is a form of soft Gnosticism. It implies that the "real" meaning of the Bible is not on the surface, accessible to any diligent reader, but is a hidden, complex meaning that can only be unlocked by the theological experts with their special tools and training. The biblical worldview, in contrast, is that the central, saving message of the Word of God is clear and accessible to all who will read it with a humble and open heart.

Question 99. What is the ultimate source of assurance and hope for the believer, according to the Bible?

Answer 99. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): The ultimate source of the believer's assurance and hope is not an abstract philosophical decree or a fleeting subjective emotion, but the solid, architectural foundation of the **person and work of Jesus Christ**, as revealed in the promises of God's Word. Our hope is not anchored in the secret counsels of God's eternal election, nor is it anchored in the shifting sands of our own feelings or performance. It is anchored "within the veil," in the finished, atoning work of our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. Our assurance rests on the objective, external reality of His shed blood and His empty tomb. We have hope because He is our "merciful and faithful high priest" (Hebrews 2:17). We have assurance because of His unbreakable promises, such as "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). This objective foundation is then confirmed and made personal to us by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, who testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. And it is demonstrated and strengthened by the external evidence of a life that is being transformed and is bearing the fruit of obedience. But the source, the anchor, the bedrock, is always Christ and His unchanging Word.

Scripture References: Hebrews 6:18-20, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 Peter 1:21, Titus 2:13, Romans 5:1-5, Romans 8:16, Colossians 1:27, 1 Timothy 1:1, 1 John 5:11-13

Anticipated Rebuttals: The primary **rebuttal** from the Calvinistic side is that a hope based on Christ's promises is not secure unless one knows for certain that those promises apply to them through an unconditional decree. They argue that without the foundation of unconditional election, our hope is ultimately resting on the instability of our own faith. This argument, however, misunderstands the nature of faith. Faith is not trust in our own ability to believe; it is trust in the object of our belief—Christ Himself. Our hope is not in the strength of our grip on the anchor, but in the unshakeable nature of the anchor to which we are holding. The Bible consistently directs our gaze outward to Christ, not inward to our own status or performance, as the source of our hope.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The basis of assurance is a key pastoral issue. **Calvinism (Reformed and Presbyterian churches)** can lead to a crisis of assurance by forcing the believer to look inward for the "marks" of their election. On the other extreme, some forms of "decision theology" common in **evangelical and Baptist** circles can create a false assurance based on a one-time prayer or decision, detached from the ongoing reality of a relationship with Christ. The most biblically balanced view, which anchors assurance in the objective work of Christ and His promises, is a hallmark of the **Lutheran** tradition and was also central to the teaching of the **Wesleyan** revival.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For decree-based hope) Romans 8:29-30; (For decision-based hope) John 5:24

Verses of Correction: Hebrews 6:19, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 Timothy 1:1, Colossians 1:27, Romans 15:13

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument that hope must be based on an unconditional decree can be seen as a **Category Error**. It confuses the category of "source of hope" with the category of "cause of salvation." The ultimate cause of our salvation is the sovereign grace of God. But the biblical *source* of our ongoing hope and assurance is the person and promises of Christ, to whom we are called to look in faith. It's like a person rescued from a fire. The ultimate cause of their rescue was the fire department's decision to respond. But the ongoing source of their feeling of safety is the sight of the firefighter carrying them and the sound of his voice telling them they will be okay.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption of **rationalism**, which seeks a logically airtight, deductive certainty for assurance. It wants to be able to say, "God has unconditionally elected me (Premise A). God's election cannot fail (Premise B). Therefore, I am eternally secure (Conclusion C)." The Bible, however, presents assurance in more relational and empirical terms. It is the confidence that comes from trusting a person and seeing the evidence of that relationship in one's life. It is the certainty of a relationship, not the certainty of a syllogism.

Question 100. How can we "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) in a spirit of truth and love?

Answer 100. Topical Bible Study Correction (KJV): To "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" requires the believer to become a master architect who builds with both a mason's trowel and a soldier's sword in hand. It is a call to a dual commitment: a fierce, unwavering fidelity to **truth**, and a gentle, patient spirit of **love**. To contend in truth means we must first know the faith that was once delivered. This requires a diligent, topical study of the Scriptures, building our convictions on the whole counsel of God, not the shifting traditions of men. It means we must be willing to identify and expose error, to "mark them which cause divisions... contrary to the doctrine" (Romans 16:17), and to refuse to compromise on the essential, foundational truths of the gospel. However, to contend in love means that our defense of the truth must never be a vehicle for our own pride, arrogance, or contentiousness. The "servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Timothy 2:24-25). We are contending for a glorious truth about a gracious

Savior, and our demeanor must reflect the beauty of that truth. We speak the truth, but we speak it in love, always seeking the restoration of the erring and the salvation of the lost, not merely the victory of our own argument. It is this sacred balance of doctrinal integrity and gracious character that truly honors Christ and effectively contends for His faith.

Scripture References: Jude 1:3, 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Ephesians 4:15, Romans 16:17, Titus 1:9, Philippians 1:27, 1 Peter 3:15, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Anticipated Rebuttals: One **rebuttal** comes from the compromiser, who argues that "contending" is inherently unloving and that the most important thing is unity, even at the expense of doctrinal truth. This is the error of a false ecumenism that sacrifices truth on the altar of peace. On the other extreme is the heresy hunter, who argues that love and gentleness are a form of compromise and that the truth must be proclaimed with harshness and unyielding severity. This is the error of a loveless orthodoxy that wins the argument but loses the soul. The biblical model rejects both extremes. Paul was a fierce contender who pronounced an anathema on false teachers, but he was also a loving pastor who wept for the souls of men.

Churches Teaching Fallacies: The error of a loveless contention is often found in some corners of **Independent Fundamental Baptist** and **hyper-Reformed** circles, where a pugnacious and divisive spirit can sometimes be mistaken for faithfulness. The opposite error of a truthless compromise is a hallmark of **liberal and progressive Christianity**, and is the driving force behind the modern **ecumenical movement**, which often seeks institutional unity without a shared foundation in the apostolic gospel. The historical figure who perhaps best embodied the biblical balance was the Apostle Paul himself, who could write the sharp, polemical rebukes of Galatians and the gentle, pastoral encouragements of Philippians.

Verses of Apparent Support: (For harshness) Galatians 1:8, Titus 1:13; (For compromise) John 17:21, Romans 14:1

Verses of Correction: 2 Timothy 2:24-25, Ephesians 4:15, 1 Peter 3:15, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Logical Fallacy Analysis: The argument of the harsh contender often commits the **False Dilemma** fallacy. It presents only two options: either you are a hard, uncompromising defender of the truth, or you are a soft, effeminate compromiser. It fails to see the biblical third option: the gentle warrior, the meek instructor, the one who speaks the truth in love. The argument of the compromiser also commits a **False Dilemma**: either you have institutional unity, or you have divisive doctrinal strife. It fails to see the possibility of a spiritual unity that is based on a shared commitment to the truth, even without institutional agreement on every secondary issue.

Philosophical Fallacy Exposure: The error in the opponent's reasoning comes from a flawed foundational assumption that **views truth and love as being in opposition to each other**. The harsh contender believes that love must be sacrificed for the sake of truth. The compromiser believes that truth must be sacrificed for the sake of love. This is a false philosophical dichotomy. The biblical worldview is that truth and love are inextricably linked. God is both truth and love. Jesus was "full of grace and truth." To speak the truth without love is to misrepresent the God of

love. To show a "love" that is indifferent to truth is to misrepresent the God of truth. The Christian is called to hold these two divine attributes together in their character and their ministry.

Part III: The Fireside Chats (The Narrative Chapters)

The Great Paradox—Imputed vs. Infused

The Failure of Modern Theology

The modern church has lost its way because it has forgotten the most essential question of the faith: How can a holy God justify an ungodly man without compromising His own holiness? We are currently witnessing a theological civil war between two camps that have both missed the mark. On one side, we have the "Free Grace" teachers like Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges, who rightly defend the gift of God but often fail to emphasize the crushing weight of the Law. On the other side, we have the "Lordship Salvation" teachers like John MacArthur and Paul Washer, who are terrified of cheap grace and have reacted by dragging the believer back under the law.

They have failed to understand the Great Paradox that only the Cross can solve through the doctrine of Imputed Righteousness. John MacArthur and Paul Washer have looked at the laziness of modern Christianity and attempted to fix it by demanding higher performance from the sinner. They believe that by preaching a harder gospel—one that demands total surrender, constant obedience, and visible fruit—they are honoring God. However, in their zeal to protect the holiness of God, they have accidentally destroyed the only bridge that allows us to reach it.

They fail to distinguish between the Imputed Righteousness that was rediscovered by Martin Luther during the Reformation and the error of Infused Righteousness, which has its origin in Roman Catholicism. Imputed righteousness is a legal standing that is credited to your account, even though you do not personally possess it in your behavior. Infused righteousness, however, is the idea that God pours grace into you to make you a better person, and your salvation depends on how well you use that fuel to live a holy life. What MacArthur and Washer teach as "Lordship Salvation" is, in fact, this ancient error of infused righteousness dressed up in Protestant clothing.

The Mirror vs. The Cross

The error of Lordship Salvation is best understood by looking at where they tell the believer to focus their eyes. Groups like the Mormons, Seventh-day Adventists, and Wesleyans—such as the Methodists and the Church of the Nazarene—have all fallen into this same trap. They teach their followers to look into the mirror of their own lives to find assurance of their salvation. They believe that if they examine their behavior, their habits, and their "fruit," they will see a reflection that pleases God.

This is the equivalent of looking at a mirror to see if your face is clean, rather than looking at the water that cleanses it. When these teachers look into the mirror, they are looking for evidence of their own righteousness. They pat themselves on the back, thinking that their improvements in behavior and their dedication to ministry will be congratulated on Judgment Day. They have turned the Christian life into a performance review where the sinner tries to prove he is worthy of the salary he has received.

They have misdiagnosed themselves and their own works as being sufficient to please a holy God. They do not realize that Infused Righteousness—which relies on the improvement of the sinner—leads us to being locked outside the City of God. We simply cannot save ourselves through our own works, no matter how much "grace" we claim is helping us do them. The mirror will always reveal a flaw, a blemish, or a spot of dirt that condemns us, because the Law demands perfection, not just improvement.

The Crucifixion of the Old Man

The only path through the gates of the City that saves us is not through the mirror, but through the Cross. We must completely die legally; we do not try to fix the old life, but rather we accept that the old life has been executed. Through Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross, we are crucified with Him at the moment of our water baptism. We are buried with Him in baptism into His death, which is the final signature on the death warrant of our former self.

Therefore, our entire life record is blotted out, not just our bad deeds, but everything we would consider to be "Good Deeds." This is the part of the Gospel that the "Fruit Inspectors" like Paul Washer fail to comprehend. They want to burn up your sins, but they want to keep your "good works" as trophies to display on the shelf. But the Scripture teaches that when a man dies, his entire history dies with him—both his crimes and his charity.

My entire life record, including my years of door-to-door literature evangelism, is gone. I have spent decades preaching on the radio, giving thousands of Bible studies to hungry seekers, and writing over seven dozen books on theology. By human standards, these are "good fruits" that should prove I am a "good tree." But according to the doctrine of the Cross, my entire life—my "Old Man"—has been crucified with Christ.

The Dung of Self-Righteousness

None of the things I said or did in the flesh are going to be there to congratulate me on the day of reward. If I were to bring my 84 books and pile them up before the Throne of God, they would be nothing but ash and dust in the presence of His infinite glory. My books could go out throughout the world and be read by billions of people, becoming the most successful ministry in Earth's history. It would not matter one bit when it comes to the reward or my standing before the Father.

The Apostle Paul understood this when he looked at his own resume in the book of Philippians. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, blameless in the law, and zealous for God, yet he called all of his own righteousness "dung." He did not say his sins were dung; he said his righteousness was dung. This is the scandal that Lordship Salvation cannot accept, because they want to believe that their obedience has value in the eyes of God.

My Old Man has been crucified with Christ, including what I would consider my own righteousness. To rely on my ministry or my sanctification for assurance is to dig up a corpse and try to present it as a living sacrifice. We must leave the Old Man in the watery grave of baptism and walk solely in the newness of life, which is Christ living in us. The only thing that survives the fire of judgment is Jesus Christ, not the improvements He made to David Michael Curtis.

The Return to Rome

What John MacArthur and Paul Washer are teaching is a "U-Turn" back to the theology of Rome. The Roman Catholic Church explicitly teaches that a man is justified by grace plus the works that grace empowers him to do. They believe that God infuses virtue into the soul, and the soul must then cooperate with that grace to merit eternal life. This is exactly what Lordship Salvation teaches when it says, "If you don't have works, you don't have faith."

They are teaching you to look at the effect (your life) to prove the cause (your salvation). This reverses the flow of the Gospel and puts the burden of proof back on the shoulders of the sinner. It creates a "Puritan Panic" where the believer is constantly taking their spiritual temperature to see if they are saved. This is not the "Free Grace" of the Bible; it is a system of probation where you are only secure as long as you are performing.

Martin Luther fought this battle 500 years ago when he declared that our righteousness is "Alien." He meant that the righteousness that saves us is foreign to us; it comes from outside of our atmosphere. It is not a righteousness that grows in us like a plant; it is a righteousness that covers over us like a robe. MacArthur and Washer want to examine the plant to see if it is growing; Luther (and the Sentinel Project) points to the Robe that covers the plant entirely.

The Error of the Fruit Inspector

Paul Washer is famous for his sermon where he screams, "I don't know why you're clapping, I'm talking about you!" He acts as a "Fruit Inspector," walking through the orchard of the church, examining every branch with a magnifying glass. He tells the people that unless their fruit is ripe, perfect, and abundant, they are likely weeds that will be thrown into the fire. He condemns the "sinner's prayer" and mocks those who claim to be saved but still struggle with sin.

This theology sounds holy, but it is actually the ultimate form of pride. It assumes that the "Fruit Inspector" himself has passed the test. When Washer or MacArthur inspects the fruit of others, they are implicitly claiming that their own fruit has met the standard of God's holiness. They are congratulating themselves, saying, "God, I thank thee that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican."

They have misdiagnosed the condition of the human heart. They believe the heart can be repaired and cleaned up enough to offer "good works" to God. But Jeremiah tells us the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? Even our best motives are stained with pride and self-interest. Therefore, any system that relies on "Fruit Inspection" is doomed to fail because all the fruit of the Old Man is rotten to the core.

The Standard of the City

The only path that leads through the gates of the City of God is the path of Substitution. We cannot walk through those gates wearing our own clothes, even if we have washed them with the soap of religion. We must be clothed entirely in the garments of the King's Son. When the Father looks at us, He must see only Jesus, or He will see nothing but sin.

Infused righteousness leads us to be outside the city because it is still our righteousness, just improved by grace. It is a mixture of gold and dirt, and God does not accept alloys in His treasury. He demands pure gold, refined in the fire, which is the perfect life of Jesus Christ. If we offer Him our "sanctified life," we are offering Him a counterfeit coin.

We can't save ourselves through our own works, and we can't keep ourselves saved through our own works. The error of the Mormons and the Wesleyans is thinking that Jesus opens the door, but we have to walk up the stairs. The truth is that Jesus is the Door, the Stairs, and the Destination. We are carried by Him from start to finish, and any attempt to walk on our own two feet is an insult to the One who carries us.

The Trap of "Changed Life" Theology

The most dangerous phrase in modern evangelicalism is "A changed life is the proof of salvation." This sounds logically sound, but it is theologically disastrous. However, to be clear, I am not pointing fingers at other people; I will point them at myself. I do believe in the doctrine of repentance. I have broken the law of God; I have stolen, I have lied, and I have been a fornicator. I have hurt people and done things I am ashamed of, things I would not want to face God for on Judgment Day.

I have confessed these sins, and I have been baptized for the remission of sins in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I repented, which means I made a decision to stop that bad behavior. I used to steal, but now I try to work so I have something to give; I used to lie, but now I try to tell the truth to my neighbor; I used to hurt people, but today I try to do good to them. This is the duty of repentance, and I believe in it wholeheartedly.

However, what I reject is the idea that my changed behavior sanctifies me or that I "grow" in sanctification. I reject this because Hebrews 10 says that I have been sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. The only sanctification on my record is given to me through faith, not performance. I am sanctified because, at water baptism, I was united to Jesus's death on the cross and received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

It is the Holy Ghost that sanctifies me through faith in Jesus' one sacrifice, not my daily improvements. I do not make myself more holy because I stopped lying; I stopped lying because it was my duty to God and my neighbor. To say that my obedience makes me a "more holy person" is to rob glory from the Cross. The true Christian changes his life, but he never points to that change as the reason he is clean.

The Alien Righteousness

The solution to the Great Paradox is what Martin Luther called "Alien Righteousness." This is a righteousness that belongs to another Person—Jesus Christ—but is credited to us as if it were our own. It is an "alien" concept because it goes against every human instinct. Our instinct is to earn, to merit, to pay back, and to prove our worth.

The Gospel tells us to stop earning and start receiving. It tells us that the righteousness recorded in the Book of Life under our name is not a record of our deeds. It is a copy-paste of the life of Jesus. From His virgin birth to His perfect obedience, to His sacrificial death—all of it is legally transferred to our account the moment we are baptized into Him.

This means that when God looks at the believer, He does not see a "reformed sinner." He sees His own Son. This is the only way a Holy God can allow us into His presence. He does not lower His standard to let us in; He imputes Christ's standard to us so that we fit the requirement.

The Failure of the "Good" Man

John MacArthur and Paul Washer appeal to the "good man"—the serious, disciplined, dedicated Christian. They want to fill the pews with soldiers who are committed to the cause. But in doing so, they have unintentionally closed the door to the broken, the weak, and the failures who have nothing to offer. They have created a country club for the spiritual elite rather than a hospital for the sick.

They pat themselves on the back, thinking that their righteousness is going to be congratulated on Judgment Day. They imagine a Bema Seat where God plays a highlight reel of their sermons and missionary trips. They expect the applause of heaven for their hard work. But they have forgotten the words of Jesus: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants."

If the Apostles were unprofitable servants after doing all that was commanded, where does that leave us? It leaves us with no room for boasting. It leaves us with no "trophies" to display. It leaves us with only one option: to cast ourselves down at the feet of Jesus and say, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

The Final Verdict on Infusion

We must reject the doctrine of Infused Righteousness in all its forms. Whether it comes from the Pope in Rome, the Prophet in Salt Lake City, or the Pulpit in California, it is the same lie. It is the lie that man can contribute to his own standing before God. It is the lie that the Cross was just a "start," and now we must "finish" the job.

The Sentinel position stands firm on the rock of Sola Imputatio. We are saved by the work of Christ for us, not the work of the Spirit in us. The work in us is partial, flawed, and incomplete. The work for us is perfect, finished, and eternal. We must choose which righteousness we will trust: the one that is infused into a leaking vessel, or the one that is imputed from the King of Kings.

Looking at the mirror leads to death, for the mirror only reflects the Old Man who is destined for the grave. Looking to the Cross leads to life, for it reveals the Substitute who took our place. We must turn our backs on the mirror, smash the glass of our own vanity, and fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. We are not saved because we are good; we are saved because He is good, and He has given His goodness to us as a free gift.

The Mathematics of Infinity—The Angelic Argument

The Misunderstanding of the Law

The modern church has fallen into a deep sleep regarding the true nature of God's Law. We hear preachers today speak of the Law as if it were a ladder that we can climb, provided we have enough time, discipline, and the "help" of the Holy Spirit. They treat the Ten Commandments like a checklist for a job application, believing that if they can tick off the majority of the boxes, they will secure the position. They have reduced the terrifying thunder of Mount Sinai to a gentle whisper that can be managed by a "purpose-driven" life.

However, the Apostle Paul and the brother of our Lord, James, had a radically different understanding of what the Law demands. They did not view the Law as a percentage game where a score of 90% is a passing grade. James 2:10 makes the terrifying statement: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." This removes the possibility of a "good enough" Christian life, for it establishes a binary standard where you are either perfect or you are condemned.

Paul echoes this in Galatians 3:10, declaring that as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. Why? Because it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The requirement is not just to do some things or even most things; the requirement is to do all things, continuously, without a single interruption from birth to death. The moment you fail in one thought or deed, you have broken the entire chain, and you are left holding nothing but the links of your own damnation.

The Bar Raised Higher than Moses

Many theologians, including those in the "Lordship Salvation" camp, argue that while the Old Testament had strict laws, Jesus brought a "Law of Love" that focuses more on the heart than the letter. They use this to suggest that Jesus actually lowered the bar, making it easier for sincere disciples to enter the Kingdom. But this is a catastrophic misreading of the Sermon on the Mount, for Jesus did not come to lower the standard of Moses; He came to raise it to the level of the Infinite.

When Moses came down from the mountain, he brought commandments that regulated outward behavior: do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal. A disciplined Pharisee could theoretically keep these outward commandments and feel quite good about himself. But Jesus stripped away the comfort of outward obedience by exposing the intent of the heart. He declared that anger is murder and a lustful glance is adultery, thereby condemning every man who had ever felt self-righteous about his clean criminal record.

Jesus concluded this terrifying sermon with the ultimate command in Matthew 5:48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This is the true "Law of Christ," and it is infinitely harder than the Law of Moses. Moses demanded the obedience of a servant, but Jesus demands the perfection of God Himself. If you claim to be a follower of Jesus

who is saved by your commitment to His Lordship, you must ask yourself: Are you as perfect as the Father in Heaven?

The Infinite Gap

This command to be "perfect as your Father" introduces a mathematical problem that no amount of human effort can solve. The perfection of God the Father is infinite; it has no beginning, no end, and no limitation. It is not just that God does good things; it is that He is the very definition of Goodness, existing in a state of unapproachable light. Therefore, the standard for entry into His presence is not "better than average" or "better than I used to be"; the standard is Infinite Holiness.

To bridge the gap between a sinner and an infinite God, you would need a righteousness that is also infinite. But here lies the tragedy of the creature: everything that is created is finite. Even if a man could live a thousand years and spend every second of those years doing good works, the sum of his righteousness would still be a finite number. You cannot reach infinity by adding up finite numbers, no matter how long you count.

This is where the "Fruit Inspectors" fail in their mathematics. They look at a man who has repented of his sins and is now doing good works, and they say, "Look at his progress; surely he is saved." But they are measuring the distance he has traveled from the gutter, not the distance that remains to the Throne. He may be a mile further down the road than the drug addict, but he is still an infinite distance away from the perfection of the Father.

The Angelic Thought Experiment

To understand the hopelessness of trying to satisfy God with creature righteousness, consider the angels. Scripture tells us there is an innumerable host of angels—"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." These are beings of immense power and glory who have stood in the presence of God since the dawn of creation. Unlike us, they have never sinned; they have never had a stray thought, a rebellious desire, or a moment of hesitation in doing God's will.

Imagine we could take the righteousness of one unfallen angel—a record of millions of years of flawless obedience—and place it on a scale. Now, let us take the righteousness of all 10 quadrillion angels in the heavenly host and combine them into a single, massive pile of holiness. We are talking about a collective righteousness that is staggering to comprehend, a mountain of good works that has never been tainted by a single speck of evil.

Yet, even if you combined the righteousness of every angel in heaven, the total sum would still be limited. Why? Because angels are created beings. Their righteousness had a beginning point, and it is limited by their capacity as creatures. The combined holiness of all the angels is a very large number, but it is not infinity.

The Failure of the Creature

This leads us to a startling conclusion: All the angels put together cannot obey the commandment of Christ. They cannot be "perfect as the Father is perfect" in the sense of possessing His infinite, uncreated nature. They are holy servants, yes, but they are not God. Their righteousness, while flawless, is still the righteousness of the creature, and therefore it falls short of the essence of the Creator.

This is why we do not worship angels. If an angel were to appear before us in all his glory, we might be tempted to bow down, just as the Apostle John was in the book of Revelation. But the angel would immediately rebuke us and say, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant." The angel knows that despite his sinlessness, he is not worthy of worship because he is not the Infinite One.

If the combined righteousness of 10 quadrillion sinless angels is not enough to equal the righteousness of God, what makes John MacArthur or Paul Washer think their righteousness has any value? If an angel who has never sinned cannot meet the infinite standard by his own merit, how can a man who has sinned hope to meet it by "repenting" and trying harder? The arrogance of Lordship Salvation is that it assumes a sinful man can achieve what a sinless angel cannot: a standing that merits the approval of the Infinite.

Distinguishing Doctrine: Repentance vs. Sanctification

At this point, we must make a very clear distinction between two biblical doctrines that are often confused: Repentance and Sanctification. I want to be crystal clear: I believe in the doctrine of repentance. I believe that when a man realizes he is sinning against God, it is his duty to stop. I have broken the law of God; I have lied, stolen, and hurt people, and I have turned from those things because they are wrong.

Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of action. It is the creature acknowledging the Creator's authority and aligning his behavior with God's commands. I used to steal, and now I work; I used to lie, and now I speak the truth. This is good, right, and necessary. But we must never make the mistake of calling this change in behavior "Sanctification" in the sense that it saves us or cleanses our record.

My repentance is my act. It is the act of a finite, flawed creature trying to do better. But Sanctification, in the biblical sense of what makes us fit for God's presence, is God's act. Hebrews 10:10 tells us, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The only sanctification that matters for eternity is the one that was purchased on the Cross and applied to me when I was baptized into His death.

The Confusion of Duty and Merit

The problem with the modern teaching on "Lordship" is that it takes the duty of repentance and elevates it to the level of saving merit. They tell you that your "changed life" (your repentance) is the proof that you are sanctified. But my changed life is simply me doing what I should have been doing all along. Jesus said in Luke 17:10, "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

If I stop robbing banks, I haven't earned a medal; I've simply stopped being a criminal. My repentance is simply the cessation of rebellion; it does not generate righteousness. It does not add "plus points" to my account that can counterbalance the "minus points" of my sin. Therefore, while I practice repentance daily as my duty to my King, I do not look at my repentance as my "Sanctification."

True Sanctification is not a process of me getting better; it is the state of me being washed, justified, and sanctified by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 6:11). It is a completed status that I received the moment I believed and was baptized. To look at my behavior and call it "sanctification" is to look at a dirty rag and call it a royal robe. I repent because I fear God, but I am sanctified because God loves me and gave His Son for me.

The Only One Who Clears the Bar

So, if the angels fail the test of infinite perfection, and if my repentance fails the test of infinite perfection, who can be saved? The answer lies in the only Person in history who is not a created being. Hebrews 1:3 describes Jesus as "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Jesus is not a creature; He is the Creator entered into creation.

Jesus is the only One who can stand in God's presence as a Co-Equal and Co-Eternal Son. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God because He is God. Therefore, the righteousness of Jesus Christ is not finite; it is Infinite. When Jesus obeyed the Law, He did not just obey it as a man; He filled it with the value of His divine nature.

This is why the Gospel is not about us becoming like angels; it is about us being found in Christ. Because Jesus is infinite, His righteousness has no limit. It is enough to cover the sins of the whole world and still have an ocean of merit left over. When this Infinite Righteousness is imputed to my account, I instantly possess a standing that is "perfect as the Father is perfect."

The Limit of the Creature

We must humbly accept the limit of our nature. We are dust. We are grass that withers and flowers that fade. No matter how much we "sanctify" ourselves through discipline and repentance, we will never become the Infinite God. We will always remain creatures, dependent entirely on the source of Life.

John MacArthur and Paul Washer try to cross the infinite gap by building a bridge of works. They may call it "grace-empowered works," but it is still a bridge built from the materials of the earth. It will never reach the other side. The gap is too wide, and the holiness of God is too high.

The only way across is to be carried by the One who spans the gap. We do not need a "helper" to assist us in building the bridge; we need a Savior who is the Bridge. We need a righteousness that is "Alien"—coming from outside of the created order—to save us from the judgment of the Creator.

The Danger of Worshiping the Mirror

When you rely on your "changed life" for assurance, you are essentially engaging in creature worship. You are worshiping the work of your own hands. You are looking at your repentance—which is a good thing in its proper place—and turning it into an idol. You are saying, "This change in me is what makes me acceptable."

But God will not share His glory with another. He will not allow the "good works" of a man to share the stage with the Perfect Work of His Son. If you bring your repentance to the judgment seat and say, "Lord, look how I changed," you are offering finite currency to pay an infinite debt. It will be rejected.

We must repent, yes. We must stop our sinning, yes. But we must never trust in our stopping. We must trust only in the Starting and Finishing of Jesus Christ. My repentance is my duty; His blood is my salvation. My change is temporary and flawed; His righteousness is eternal and perfect.

The Conclusion of the Matter

The mathematics of salvation are simple, yet they destroy every religion of works.

- The Demand: Infinite Perfection (Matthew 5:48).
- The Supply: Finite Righteousness (Angels + Men).
- The Result: Bankruptcy.

There is only one variable that solves the equation: The Lord Jesus Christ. He brings the Infinite Supply that meets the Infinite Demand. By faith, we step out of the equation of our own lives and into the equation of His. We stop trying to add up our pennies to buy a star, and we simply accept the gift of the Sun.

Let us be done with the arrogance of thinking we can be "good enough." Let us be done with the fear that we haven't "done enough." Let us rest in the fact that He has done it all, and He has done it infinitely well. We don't worship angels, and we certainly shouldn't worship ourselves. We worship the Lamb who is worthy, for He alone has cleared the bar.

The Pharisee Paradox—The Failure of Fruit Inspection

The Time Travel Test

To understand the fatal flaw in the theology of John MacArthur and Paul Washer, we must conduct a thought experiment. Imagine that we could take a modern "Lordship Salvation" preacher—let's call him the "Fruit Inspector"—and transport him back in time to the dusty streets of Jerusalem around the year 30 AD. His mission is to apply his theology to the people he meets, to inspect their lives for "evidence" of salvation, and to determine who is truly a child of God.

He arrives in the city armed with his sermons about radical obedience, total surrender, and the necessity of a "changed life." He begins to look for people who fit his description of a true believer: men who are serious about the Law, men who have turned away from worldly pleasures, and men who are zealous for the holiness of God. He walks past the taverns and the tax collectors' booths, shaking his head at the visible sin, and heads straight for the Temple courts where the "serious" religious people gather.

There, he finds a group of men who seem to be the perfect embodiment of his preaching. They are dressed modestly, they speak with grave reverence, and they are meticulous in their obedience to God's commandments. They fast twice a week, they tithe even on the tiny spices in their kitchen, and they spend hours in prayer. The "Fruit Inspector" nods in approval, thinking, "Finally, I have found the true believers. These men have clearly counted the cost and surrendered everything."

The Best People in Judea

It is a historical fact that the Pharisees were, by every outward standard, the "best people" in Israel. If you were a parent in the first century, you would want your daughter to marry a Pharisee because he was disciplined, moral, and a good provider. They were not the monsters that Sunday School cartoons often portray them to be; they were the fundamentalists of their day who were trying to call the nation back to holiness.

In terms of "outward fruit," the Pharisees were undisputed champions. They did not drink, they did not visit prostitutes, and they did not cheat on their taxes. If John MacArthur were to look at their lives through the lens of his theology, he would be forced to conclude that they were "Good Trees" bearing "Good Fruit." Their sanctification was visible, consistent, and public for all to see.

By contrast, the "Fruit Inspector" would be horrified by the group of men following Jesus of Nazareth. He would see Peter, a rough fisherman with a temper who carries a sword and eventually denies his Lord. He would see Matthew, a traitorous tax collector who spent his life robbing his own people for Rome. He would see a ragtag group of uneducated nobodies who frequently misunderstood Jesus, argued about who was the greatest, and even tried to call down fire on a Samaritan village.

The Mirror of Deception

This brings us to the Pharisee Paradox: If "fruit" (outward behavior) is the proof of salvation, then the Pharisees should have been saved, and the Disciples should have been lost. The Pharisees had the "changed life" that modern preachers demand, while the Disciples often looked like carnal, stumbling failures. This exposes the danger of looking into the mirror of performance to find assurance.

The "Fruit Inspector" relies on the mirror because he believes the reflection tells the truth. But the mirror is a liar. It can show you a clean face while hiding a dirty heart. Jesus called the Pharisees "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones." They looked perfect in the mirror of their own works, but they were spiritually dead because they were trusting in the very reflection they admired.

John MacArthur and Paul Washer tell their followers to inspect their fruit to see if it is real. But if a Pharisee inspects his fruit, he sees nothing but shiny, beautiful obedience. He sees tithing, fasting, and Sabbath-keeping. His "fruit inspection" confirms his false assurance, leading him to march confidently toward hell while thanking God for his own righteousness.

The Prayer of the Proud

Jesus gave us the ultimate warning against this theology in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9-14). He told this parable specifically to those "which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." Notice that the Pharisee does not claim to be righteous apart from God; in fact, he begins his prayer by thanking God.

"God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

This is the prayer of the Lordship Salvationist. He is not claiming to save himself; he is thanking God for the "grace" that has made him different from the sinners around him. He is looking at the mirror and saying, "Lord, look at my fruit! Look at how I have changed! I am not like that dirty tax collector over there who has no fruit." He genuinely believes his "sanctified life" is the evidence of his justification.

The Failure of Comparative Righteousness

The Pharisee made the fatal mistake of using comparative righteousness. He looked at the extortioners, the adulterers, and the tax collector, and he saw that he was better than them. Mathematically, he was right; he was a morally superior human being compared to the criminals. But as we learned in the previous chapter, being better than a criminal does not make you equal to God.

Paul Washer often uses this same comparative logic. He mocks the "carnal Christian" who struggles with sin and contrasts him with the zealous missionary who is "on fire for God." He tells the struggling sinner, "You can't be saved because you don't look like me." This is the spirit of the Pharisee disguised as the zeal of the prophet.

Comparative righteousness is a trap because God does not grade on a curve. It does not matter if you are the tallest dwarf in the room; you are still too short to touch the ceiling of God's holiness. The Pharisee felt safe because he was taller than the Publican, but both of them were infinitely shorter than the glory of God. The difference was that the Publican knew he was short, while the Pharisee stood on his tiptoes and thought he was a giant.

The Rejection of the Good Tree

The shock of the Gospel is that Jesus rejected the righteousness of the "best people" and accepted the plea of the "worst person." The Pharisee went home condemned, despite his fasting and tithing. The Publican went home justified, despite his extortion and treason. Why? Because the Publican did not look at the mirror; he looked at the Mercy Seat.

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

The Publican had no fruit to offer. He could not say, "Lord, I have stopped stealing," because he was likely still trapped in his profession. He could not say, "Lord, look at my repentance," because he felt only the weight of his guilt. He had nothing but a desperate need for propitiation. And because he relied 100% on God's mercy and 0% on his own life, he was the one who was justified.

The Meaning of "Exceed"

This brings us to the terrifying statement Jesus made in Matthew 5:20: "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

When Lordship Salvation teachers read this verse, they interpret it to mean "quantity." They think Jesus is saying, "The Pharisees tithe 10%, so you must tithe 20%. They fast twice a week, so you must fast three times. You must out-work the hardest workers in Israel." If this interpretation is true, then no one can be saved, for the Pharisees were professional law-keepers who dedicated their entire lives to the task.

But Jesus was not talking about quantity; He was talking about quality. He was saying that the kind of righteousness the Pharisees possessed—human, self-generated, outward obedience—was worthless. To enter the Kingdom, you need a righteousness that "exceeds" theirs not in degree, but in kind. You need a righteousness that is not of this world. You need the Imputed Righteousness of Christ.

The Different Kind of Righteousness

To "exceed" the Pharisees means to possess a righteousness that is alien to humanity. The Pharisees had the maximum amount of human righteousness possible for a fallen creature. They had maxed out the credit card of human effort. To go beyond them, you have to switch currencies entirely.

This is why the Disciples, despite their flaws, "exceeded" the Pharisees. They did not exceed them in behavior (at least not initially); they exceeded them in standing. They were covered by the righteousness of the Son of God. When God looked at Peter, He did not see a hot-headed fisherman; He saw the perfection of Jesus. When God looked at the Pharisee, He saw a very well-behaved corpse.

The lesson for us is clear: Do not try to beat the Pharisees at their own game. You will lose. There will always be a monk, a legalist, or a "Lordship" preacher who is more disciplined than you. Do not try to out-perform them. Instead, step out of the game entirely. Stop trying to establish your own righteousness and submit to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3).

The Danger of "Lifestyle Evangelism"

One of the byproducts of Lordship Salvation is the concept of "Lifestyle Evangelism." This is the idea that we win people to Christ by showing them how good, happy, and holy our lives are. We are told to be the "Bible that people read." While it is true that we should let our light shine, relying on our lifestyle to convict sinners is a dangerous gamble.

If your lifestyle is the evidence of the truth of the Gospel, what happens when you fail? What happens when your neighbor sees you lose your temper, or hears a rumor about your past? If the validity of Jesus depends on the quality of your life, then Jesus is on shaky ground.

Furthermore, the Mormons also practice "Lifestyle Evangelism," and frankly, they are often better at it than we are. They are polite, family-oriented, hardworking, and abstain from alcohol and tobacco. If "lifestyle" is the test, then we should all become Mormons. The power of the Gospel is not that "I was bad and now I am good." The power of the Gospel is "I am bad, but He is the Savior."

The Blindness of the Fruit Inspector

The "Fruit Inspector" is blind because he is looking for the wrong thing. He is looking for infused righteousness (the change in the man) instead of imputed righteousness (the standing in the Christ). He is like a man looking for a star by staring at a mud puddle. He might see a faint reflection of the star in the mud, but he is mostly just looking at mud.

When Paul Washer screams at his congregation, he is trying to scare the mud into becoming a star. He tells them that if they don't shine bright enough, they aren't real stars. But the mud cannot change its nature. The only hope for the mud is to be washed away so that only the Sun remains.

The Pharisees were the ultimate Fruit Inspectors. They spent all day inspecting each other's fruit. "Did you wash your hands up to the elbow? Did you tithe on the mint and cumin? Did you walk more than a Sabbath day's journey?" They were obsessed with the minutiae of performance because they had no concept of grace. They thought God was an accountant, not a Father.

The Scandal of the "Carnal" Christian

The most offensive thing to a Lordship Salvation teacher is the idea of a "Carnal Christian." They argue that such a person cannot exist—that if you are saved, you must be spiritual. But the Apostle Paul disagrees. In 1 Corinthians 3:1, he writes: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ."

Paul identifies these people as "brethren" and "babes in Christ," yet he calls them "carnal" (fleshly). They were jealous, divisive, and immature. By Paul Washer's standard, these Corinthians should have been kicked out of the faith and told they were lost. But Paul does not tell them to get saved again; he tells them to grow up.

The existence of the Carnal Christian proves that standing and state are two different things. Your standing is in heaven, perfect and complete in Christ. Your state is on earth, often messy, fluctuating, and immature. The Pharisee confuses the two; he thinks his good state creates his standing. The Sentinel Project affirms the biblical truth: Your standing is fixed by the Cross, even when your state is shaken by the flesh.

The Warning to the Modern Church

If we do not learn the lesson of the Pharisee Paradox, we are doomed to repeat it. We will build churches filled with self-righteous, judgmental people who are convinced they are saved because they don't smoke, drink, or watch R-rated movies. We will create a culture of "fake fruit," where people pretend to be perfect to avoid being questioned by the "Fruit Inspectors."

We will teach our children to trust in their behavior rather than in their Savior. And when they inevitably crash and burn—when they realize they cannot keep the law perfectly—they will either despair and leave the faith, or they will harden their hearts and become hypocrites.

We must tear down the mirror of works and smash it into a thousand pieces. We must point the sinner—and the saint—away from their own performance. We must tell them the truth: "You are not the good guy in this story. You are the villain. You are the tax collector. You are the thief on the cross. But there is a Hero who has come to save villains."

Conclusion: The Trophy of the Pharisee

The Pharisee wanted to bring his trophy to the temple. He wanted to hold up his fasting and his tithing and say, "God, look at this." It was a beautiful trophy, polished by years of discipline. But God hated it. It was an idol of self-worship.

The Publican had no trophy. He had empty hands and a broken heart. He had nothing to offer but his sin. And because his hands were empty, God was able to fill them with the righteousness of Jesus.

We have a choice. We can be the Fruit Inspector, proudly displaying our basket of works, or we can be the Prodigal, coming home with the smell of the pigsty still on our clothes, trusting only in the Father's welcome. The Fruit Inspector gets nothing but his own pride. The Prodigal gets the robe, the ring, and the fatted calf. Let us stop inspecting and start resting.

The Tale of Two Trees—Refuting the Corpse

The Diagnosis of the Disease

Every doctor knows that you cannot cure a patient if you misdiagnose the disease. In theology, the "disease" is the nature of fallen man. If we get the definition of sin wrong, we will get the definition of salvation wrong. The Calvinists—including men like John MacArthur and the Puritan writers—have diagnosed the patient as a "Corpse." They teach a doctrine called Total Inability, which claims that a sinner is so dead in sin that he is like a stone or a stick, utterly incapable of responding to God, asking for help, or even knocking on the door of salvation until God unilaterally zaps him with life.

I explicitly reject this definition of Total Depravity. While I believe man is depraved, I do not believe he is a robot or a zombie. The Scriptures do not describe man as a creature devoid of any knowledge; they describe him as a creature possessing a terrifying and fatal Mixture. The problem with man is not that he knows nothing; the problem is that he knows too much.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Notice the name of the tree: it was not the Tree of Pure Evil. It was a tree that combined the Holy with the Profane. When they ate, they did not become 100% demons; they became a complex mixture of the image of God and the nature of the Serpent.

The Mixture of the Soul

This "Mixture" is what defines the human condition. Every human being born of Adam possesses the knowledge of Good and Evil. Some men, like the philanthropist or the dedicated doctor, appear to have more "good" in their mixture. Others, like the murderer or the tyrant, appear to have more "evil." But in the eyes of a Holy God, the ratio of the mixture is irrelevant because the presence of any evil corrupts the whole vessel.

We are not "totally depraved" in the sense that we are as bad as we could possibly be; clearly, Hitler was worse than my neighbor, though both were sinners. We are Total in our guilt because the standard of God allows for zero percentage of evil. The Calvinist argues that man is incapable of doing anything "good" in any sense. But Jesus Himself acknowledged that even evil fathers know how to give good gifts to their children (Luke 11:13).

The Calvinist doctrine of the "Corpse" contradicts the reality we see in Scripture and in life. Men have a conscience; they know right from wrong (Romans 2:15). They have the ability to feel guilt, to fear judgment, and to desire mercy. To say that a man is a "Corpse" who cannot even desire God is to deny the very faculty of the will that God judged in the Garden.

The Poisoned Stew

To understand why the "Mixture" is fatal, consider a large pot of beef stew. It is made with the finest ingredients: fresh vegetables, high-quality meat, and savory broth. It is 98% pure, nutritious

food. But suppose I take a small vial of cyanide—just 2% of the total volume—and pour it into the pot.

Is the stew now "mostly good"? By volume, yes. But is it edible? Absolutely not. The 2% poison has totally corrupted the 98% good. If you eat it, you will not be 98% nourished; you will be 100% dead. This is the biblical view of human depravity. It is not that man is a vat of pure acid; it is that man is a vessel of good potential that has been irrevocably poisoned by sin.

This applies directly to the preaching we hear in modern pulpits. When you go to hear a person preach at a pope's cathedral or in an institutional church, they rarely teach pure evil. If they stood up and praised Satan, everyone would leave. Instead, they serve a Poisoned Stew. They teach a lot of good things—morality, kindness, family values—but they mix in the "poison" of works-based salvation or the denial of the blood. Listening to their sermon is the same as eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; you swallow the lie along with the truth, and the mixture kills you.

The Lie of Inability

The primary reason I reject the Calvinist term "Total Depravity" is that they use it to teach that it is impossible for a sinner to reach out his hand to God. They claim that because the sinner is "dead," he cannot ask, he cannot seek, and he cannot knock. They argue that God must regenerate the sinner before the sinner can even believe. This turns the Gospel into a lottery where God randomly picks winners while the rest remain frozen in a state of inability.

This doctrine contradicts the plain words of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Matthew 7:7, Jesus gave an open invitation: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Jesus did not say, "Wait to be zapped, and then you will be able to knock." He placed the responsibility of knocking squarely on the sinner.

If a man is truly a "Corpse" who cannot knock, then Jesus is mocking him by telling him to do so. It would be like standing over a man in a coffin and commanding him to do push-ups. But Jesus is not a mocker. He knows that while man is spiritually bankrupt, he still possesses the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He knows he is naked (evil) and he knows he needs covering (good). That knowledge gives him the capacity—and the responsibility—to cry out for mercy.

The Hand of the Beggar

The Calvinist will argue, "But if you say the sinner can knock, you are giving the sinner credit for his salvation! You are making faith a 'work'!" This is nonsense. Imagine a beggar starving in the street. A rich king approaches him and offers him a banquet ticket. The beggar reaches out his trembling, dirty hand and takes the ticket.

Does the beggar now boast, "I saved myself because I had the strength to lift my arm"? Of course not. The lifting of the arm did not pay for the banquet. The lifting of the arm had no merit. It was simply the method of receiving. Faith is not a work that earns salvation; it is the empty hand that accepts the gift.

By teaching Total Inability, Calvinism cuts off the hands of the beggar. It tells him, "You cannot even reach out. You must wait for the King to force-feed you." This destroys the beautiful simplicity of the Gospel, which is "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). We are not saved because we are strong enough to knock; we are saved because Jesus is gracious enough to open the door.

The Tale of Two Trees

This brings us to the core conflict with Lordship Salvation regarding the "Two Trees." In Matthew 7:17, Jesus says, "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." John MacArthur and Paul Washer interpret this to mean that the Christian is the "Good Tree." They teach that if you are saved, your nature has been so fundamentally changed that you will—and must—produce good fruit. If you produce bad fruit, they claim you were never a Good Tree to begin with.

This interpretation leads to a logical and theological disaster. If I am a "Good Tree," and a Good Tree cannot bring forth evil fruit (Matthew 7:18), then I should never sin again. Yet, every Christian—including John MacArthur and Paul Washer—sins every single day. They have bad thoughts, moments of pride, and failures of love.

If a "Good Tree" produces only good fruit, and I produce a mixture of good and bad fruit, then logically, I cannot be the Good Tree. This leaves the believer in a state of panic. He looks at his life, sees the "bad fruit" of his struggle, and concludes he is lost. This is the inevitable result of trying to apply the title of "Good Tree" to a fallen human being.

The Only Good Tree

There is only one solution to this riddle: Jesus is the Good Tree. He is the only One in the history of the world who lived a life of 100% good fruit with 0% mixture of evil. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. During His forty days in the wilderness, the Devil shook the tree of Jesus's life with every temptation imaginable, and not a single rotten apple fell to the ground.

Every one of us—including the greatest saints—is the "Corrupt Tree" by nature. We are the children of Adam, born from the seed of the Mixture. We produce evil fruit naturally. Even after we are saved, our flesh remains a corrupt tree. This is why Paul says in Romans 7, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."

For John MacArthur or Paul Washer to stand in the pulpit and say, "I am a Good Tree," is the height of arrogance. It is to claim that they have achieved a state where they can no longer produce evil fruit. To make the claim that "I cannot bear forth bad fruit" is to make God a liar, for His Word says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

The Romans 7 Reality

The Apostle Paul gives us the perfect picture of the believer's condition in Romans 7. Paul was not a novice; he was a mature Apostle, baptized, filled with the Holy Ghost, and writing Scripture. Yet, he describes a civil war raging inside him. He says, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

Did Paul talk about the knowledge of Good and Evil in Romans 7? Absolutely. He had the Knowledge of the Good (his mind delighted in the law of God), but he had the Presence of Evil (his members warred against his mind). He was a walking definition of the Mixture.

If the "Lordship" interpretation were true, Paul should have said, "I used to struggle, but now I am a Good Tree, so I only do what is right." Instead, he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul realized that his flesh was still an Evil Tree, capable of producing thorns and thistles until the day he died.

The Identity Crisis Solved

So, if I am an Evil Tree in my flesh, how can I be saved? The answer is not that I transform myself into a Good Tree through discipline and repentance. The answer is that I am grafted into the Good Tree, which is Christ.

In Romans 11, Paul uses the illustration of grafting. We are the wild olive branches (wild by nature) that are grafted into the Good Olive Tree. We do not support the root; the root supports us. My standing before God is not based on the quality of my branch; it is based on the quality of the Root.

When God looks at me, He sees the Good Tree (Jesus). He sees the perfect fruit of His Son. My "fruit" is irrelevant to my salvation because my salvation depends on the Root. Lordship Salvation wants you to obsess over your branch—"Are there enough olives? Are they big enough?"—while true Grace tells you to rest in the Root.

The Danger of Fruit Inspection (Reprise)

This is why the "Fruit Inspector" theology is so dangerous. It asks the Christian to prove he is something that he is not. It asks the Evil Tree to prove he is a Good Tree by showing off his fruit. But the moment you look closely at the fruit of a Christian, you will find worms. You will find mixed motives. You will find the "2% poison" of self-righteousness.

If John MacArthur looks at his own fruit honestly, he must admit it is imperfect. If it is imperfect, it is "evil" by the standard of the Law. Therefore, by his own theology, he should condemn himself. He only escapes condemnation by grading himself on a curve—by saying, "Well, my fruit is better than it used to be." But the Law does not ask for better fruit; it demands Perfect Fruit.

We must stop trying to convince God that we are Good Trees. We must admit the truth: "Lord, I am a corrupt tree. I have the knowledge of good and evil, and too often I choose the evil. I cannot change my nature. But I thank You that You died for this corrupt tree. I thank You that You have covered my thorns with Your glory."

The "Knock" of the Condemned

The Calvinist fears that allowing man to "knock" steals glory from God. But does a drowning man steal glory from the lifeguard by screaming "Help"? Does the patient steal glory from the surgeon by signing the consent form?

The "Knock" is the most humble action a human being can take. It is an admission of helplessness. It is the Prodigal Son coming to his senses in the pig pen. He did not save himself from the famine; his father did. But he did use his legs to walk home.

We reject Total Inability because it turns God into a monster who locks the door and then blames the sinner for not entering. But we also reject the idea of human merit. We knock with empty hands. We knock as criminals seeking a pardon, not as employees seeking a paycheck.

Conclusion: The Mixture and the Mercy

We are all a mixture. We are all good and evil, wrapped in skin. We have the dignity of God's image and the depravity of Adam's fall. We cannot filter out the poison ourselves. We cannot make our fruit 100% sweet.

But we have a Savior who is not a mixture. He is pure Light. Pure Goodness. Pure Life. He took the cup of our "poisoned stew"—the cup of God's wrath against our mixture—and He drank it all. He drank the poison so that we could drink the Living Water.

Don't let anyone tell you that you are a corpse. You are a sinner who needs a Savior. You have eyes to see the Cross, ears to hear the Gospel, and a hand to knock on the Door. Use them. And when the door opens, don't look at your feet; look at the Face of the One who opened it.

The Scandal of the Penny—Equality with Angels

The Mercenary Mindset

The modern church has turned the Kingdom of God into a corporation. We are told that salvation is a free gift, but that our status in heaven depends entirely on our performance on earth. Pastors—both in the Lordship camp and the Free Grace camp—preach a doctrine of "Differential Rewards." They tell us that while we all get into the building, some of us will live in mansions while others will live in shacks; some will rule over ten cities, while others will be lucky to sweep the streets of gold.

This teaching creates a Mercenary Mindset within the body of Christ. It trains believers to view their obedience not as a love response to a Father, but as an investment strategy for a Boss. We start calculating our "crowns" based on our ministry outputs. We think, "I wrote a book, that's a jewel; I gave to the poor, that's a gold coin." We become like the Pharisees, keeping a ledger of our own righteousness, hoping to cash it in at the Bema Seat for a position of glory above our brethren.

But this system of "Pay-for-Performance" collapses when we examine the teachings of Jesus. In fact, Jesus told specific parables to destroy the idea that God pays us according to our work. He reveals a Kingdom where the economics are so scandalous that they offend the religious mind. He teaches that in the Father's house, the lifelong laborer and the last-minute convert receive the exact same reward.

The Laborers in the Vineyard

The most offensive story Jesus ever told to the religious worker is the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard found in Matthew 20. The Master goes out early in the morning and hires men to work for a penny a day. These men represent the faithful, the disciplined, and those who have served God from their youth. They work through the scorching heat of the day, bearing the burden of labor for twelve long hours.

Then, the Master goes out at the eleventh hour—just one hour before quitting time—and finds others standing idle. These are the latecomers, the stragglers, the ones who wasted their day doing nothing. He hires them too. When the whistle blows at sundown, the Master does the unthinkable: He pays the last men first, and He gives them the full penny.

Naturally, the men who worked twelve hours are furious. They complain, saying, "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day." This complaint is the heartbeat of Lordship Salvation. They look at the "Easy Believism" convert—the thief on the cross, or the deathbed repentant—and they scream, "It is not fair! We worked harder! We deserve more!"

The Meaning of the Penny

The Master's rebuke to the complaining workers cuts to the core of the Gospel: "Friend, I do thee no wrong... Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" Jesus teaches that the reward is not based on the hours clocked; it is based on the generosity of the Giver.

But what is the Penny? If the penny were merely gold or status, then the complaint of the workers might have merit. But the Penny represents Eternal Life. It represents Christ Himself. In Genesis 15:1, God told Abraham, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." The reward of the Christian is not a crown of metal; the reward is the full possession of Jesus Christ.

You cannot slice Jesus into pieces and give a "big piece" to Paul and a "small piece" to the thief. You either have Him, or you don't. Everyone who enters the City of God receives the full rights of sonship, the full access to the Tree of Life, and the full beatific vision of the Lamb. Whether you labored for eighty years or believed in your final breath, you receive the same Jesus, the same forgiveness, and the same Penny.

The Myth of the "Shack" in Heaven

We must reject the popular evangelical myth that there will be a ghetto in heaven for "carnal" Christians. Preachers often use the wood, hay, and stubble passage in 1 Corinthians 3 to terrify believers into obedience. They paint a picture of a Christian who makes it in "by the skin of his teeth," smelling like smoke, with no crowns, no robes, and no rewards, sitting in the back row of eternity for a trillion years.

This is a lie that projects human capitalism onto divine grace. When the Bible says our works are burned up, it means the Old Man's works are destroyed so that only Christ remains. It does not mean the person is punished with a lower status. When a building burns down but the man escapes, the man is still alive; he is still a son; he is still loved.

If I have written 84 books and preached to millions, and you have done nothing but trust Christ on your deathbed, and we both stand before God, my books will burn because they are finite works of a man. Your "nothing" will also burn. What remains? Christ in me and Christ in you. Since Christ is the same in both of us, our standing is the same. We are both "equal unto the angels."

The Prodigal and the Good Son

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is often preached as a story about a bad sinner and a self-righteous Pharisee. But there is a deeper interpretation that unlocks the mystery of rewards. In this view, the "Good Son" (the Elder Brother) represents the Unfallen Angels.

Consider the Elder Brother's claim: "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." No human Pharisee could truthfully say this, for all men have sinned. But the angels in heaven can say this. They have served the Father since the dawn of creation; they have labored through the heat of the universal day; they have never disobeyed a single command.

The Prodigal Son represents us—the fallen human race. We took our inheritance (life) and wasted it in the pigsty of sin. We return home with nothing to offer, smelling of the world, expecting only to be made a servant. We are the "eleventh hour" workers who have done no real work compared to the angels.

The Scandal of the Ring and the Robe

When the Prodigal returns, the Father does not put him in the servants' quarters. He calls for the Best Robe (Imputed Righteousness), the Ring (Authority), and the Shoes (Sonship). He kills the fatted calf, which represents the highest celebration of communion. The Prodigal, who did no work, is instantly elevated to the highest status in the house.

This angers the Elder Brother (the Angels/Legalists). He says, "Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come... thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." This is the shock of Grace. The Father replies, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."

The unfallen angels have always had God's presence. They have always been wealthy. But they have never known the specific joy of redemption. The Prodigal gets a reward that seems disproportionate to his behavior. He gets the same standing as the one who never sinned. This proves that in the Father's house, sonship supersedes labor.

Equality with Angels

Jesus explicitly confirmed this shocking equality in Luke 20:36. Speaking of those who are resurrected, He said: "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

Think about the implications of this. An angel has a resume of billions of years of perfect obedience. I have a resume of sixty years of mixed motives, sin, and stumbling. Yet Jesus says that in the resurrection, I will be equal to that angel. How is this possible?

It is only possible if my "resume" (my works) is thrown into the trash and replaced with the resume of Jesus. If I were rewarded based on my own works, I would be a worm compared to an angel. But because I am rewarded based on Christ's work, I am raised to a dignity that matches the heavenly host. The Penny I receive makes me a peer of the Seraphim.

The Death of the "Old Man" Trophy

This doctrine of equality explains why I must say that my 84 books and my years of ministry will not be there to congratulate me. Those works belong to David Michael Curtis, the man born of Adam. But David Michael Curtis was crucified with Christ.

God does not reward dead men. When I stand at the Judgment, God is not going to dig up the corpse of my "Old Man" to pin a medal on its chest. He is going to look at the "New Man," which

is created in righteousness and true holiness. The only works that survive are the works that Jesus did through me, and since He did them, He gets the glory for them.

If my books saved souls, it was His Word, not my cleverness. If my preaching changed lives, it was His Spirit, not my voice. Therefore, I cannot claim a special "Crown of Authorship" or a "Crown of Evangelism" that elevates me above the quiet grandmother who prayed in secret. We both simply hold up the cross of Jesus.

The Lesson of the Thief

The Thief on the Cross is the ultimate destruction of the Lordship Salvation reward system. He had no time to "change his life." He had no time to be baptized, to give to the poor, or to join a church. He had a lifetime of crime and a few minutes of faith.

According to the "Crowns and Mansions" theology, this thief should be in the basement of heaven. He should have the smallest shack in the furthest corner of the New Jerusalem. But Jesus said to him, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." To be "with Jesus" is the highest reward possible.

Did Paul get more than "with Jesus"? Did Peter get more than "Paradise"? No. The thief received the full Penny. He walked through the gates of the City just as justified as the Apostle Paul. If the thief gets the full reward without works, then works are not the currency of the Kingdom.

The Jealousy of the Worker

The reason this doctrine is hated is jealousy. We are naturally jealous creatures. We want to believe that our sacrifice makes us special. We want to believe that because we woke up early, prayed long hours, and denied ourselves, God owes us a VIP seat.

When we hear that the "Prodigal" gets the fatted calf, our inner Pharisee stands up and objects. "But Lord, I stayed home! I kept the rules!" And the Father gently reminds us, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again."

We must crucify our jealousy. We must stop looking at our brother's plate to see if he got a bigger slice of grace. We must realize that if God gave us what we earned, we would all be in hell. The fact that any of us gets a Penny is a miracle of infinite proportions.

Conclusion: The Level Ground

The ground is level at the foot of the Cross, and the ground is level on the streets of gold. There is no VIP section in the New Jerusalem. There are no "Super-Saints" strutting around with bigger crowns than the "Regular Saints." There is only a vast multitude that no man can number, all wearing the same white robes, all waving the same palm branches, and all singing the same song.

And what is that song? It is not, "Worthy is the Lamb, and worthy am I for working hard." No. The song is, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

So, lay down your calculator. Stop trying to earn a mansion. Stop worrying that your "fruit" isn't big enough to buy a ticket to the front row. You are a son, not an employee. You are a joint-heir with Christ. You will receive the full Penny, the full Robe, and the full welcome of the Father. And in that day, you will be equal to the angels, not because of what you did, but because of who He is.

Interlude: The Wittenberg Letters

The Voice from the Grave

We have spent five chapters examining the theology of the modern church. We have looked at the Law, the Fruit, and the Rewards. But sometimes, to see the present clearly, we must listen to the past.

If Martin Luther, the German monk who smashed the idols of Rome with the hammer of Justification by Faith Alone, were alive today, he would not be silent. Luther was a man of fire who suffered greatly from the "monk's disease"—the terror of looking inward for a righteousness he could never find. He despised any teaching that pointed the sinner back to their own works, calling such doctrines the "dung" of the devil.

Here are the letters he would write today, dipping his quill in the ink of Galatians, to the architects of Lordship Salvation and the merchants of Crowns.

Epistle to John MacArthur: On the Resurrection of Moses

To John MacArthur, Teacher of the Law in California,

Grace and peace in Christ? Nay, I fear it is Law and panic that you peddle.

I have read your books, and my spirit burns within me as it did when I stood against the indulgences of Rome. You are a learned man, a master of words, but you have committed the great error of the Galatians: You have made Christ into a new Moses.

You say we must receive Him as "Lord" to be saved? You speak as a papist in disguise! Do you not know that "Lord" is a title of Law, but "Savior" is a title of Grace? When I am drowning in the cesspool of my sin, I do not need a "Master" to scream commands at me from the shore; I need a Savior to plunge in and drag me out!

You tell the sinner to "count the cost"? Foolishness! A dead man has no coins to count! You ask the leper to promise he will run a marathon before you cure him. You are guarding the door of the Ark, demanding that the animals wipe their feet before they enter to escape the Flood.

You fear "Cheap Grace," so you have invented Expensive Law. But the Law is not expensive; it is impossible. You try to frighten the sinner into holiness, but you only frighten him into hypocrisy. You are trying to stitch the veil of the Temple back together, the very veil that God tore in two! Stop pointing the people to their obedience, for you are pointing them to a broken reed that will pierce their hand.

Martin Luther—in 2026

A beggar telling other beggars where to find bread.

Epistle to Paul Washer: On the Fruit Inspector

To Paul Washer, the Inspector of Fruit,

I hear your voice thundering in the pulpits, screaming, "I don't know why you are clapping, I'm talking about you!" You terrify the youth with your "Shocking Message," telling them they are lost because they do not love God enough.

Brother Paul, who loves God enough? Do you?

If you loved God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength for even one hour, you would be an angel. But you are a man! You look at the "fruit" of the people and say, "It is rotten! Cut it down!" But I ask you: When you look in the mirror, do you see a Good Tree? Or do you see a sinner saved by a righteousness that is not his own?

You have become a Fruit Inspector, walking through the orchard of the Lord with a magnifying glass, looking for worms. You tell the sheep to look at their wool to see if it is white. I tell the sheep to look at the Shepherd!

Your "Lordship Salvation" is nothing but the Monk's Ladder. I climbed that ladder until my knees bled! I scrubbed the floors, I fasted, I whipped my own back, and still, my conscience screamed, "GUILTY!" Why? Because my fruit was never sweet enough for a Holy God.

Stop telling the people to look at the mirror! The mirror kills! Point them to the Alien Righteousness of Christ. You are trying to make the patient cure himself. Give him the medicine of the Cross and let the Spirit do the work. You are scaring the children away from the table of the Father.

Martin Luther—in 2026

The man who learned that the Just shall live by Faith, not by Fruit.

Epistle to the "Free Grace" Men: On the Crowns of Gold

To the Defenders of the Gift (Ryrie, Hodges, and their kin),

I turn now to you, my half-brothers. You fight the good fight against the legalists. You rightly say that salvation is a gift, and for this, I embrace you. But why do you limp? Why is your shield cracked?

You defend the Gift, but you lower the Law! You tell the people, "You don't have to obey to be saved," which is true, but then you whisper, "The Law doesn't really matter anyway." Heresy! The Law matters infinitely! It is the hammer that drives us to Christ! By lowering the bar, you make the Cross unnecessary.

And what is this merchant's talk of "Rewards"?

I hear you telling the people to pile up their good works—their "gold, silver, and precious stones"—so they may buy a better seat at the Judgment! Have you become bankers for God? You tell the sinner, "Works do not save you, but they will get you a shiny crown."

I tell you, my "crowns" are dung!

My "gold" is dust! If I possess any "trophy" of righteousness, I will not place it on a shelf to be admired at the Bema Seat; I will cast it into the fire! I will lay it down! You are teaching men to polish their own glory, while I teach them to hide in His.

You have dried up the Water! Because you fear "works," you have thrown out the very seal of the Covenant! You call Baptism a "work of man"? Nay! It is the work of God! You have left the sinner with a mental thought but denied them the washing of the body. You have a marriage contract without a ring!

Hear me, you Defenders of the Gift: You are right that we are not saved by our walk. But you are wrong to say we can walk into Hell and still wake up in Heaven. You have built a shelter for the hypocrite and called it "Grace." Tear down this shack. The true Christian does not perform to be saved, but he surely does not sin to be comfortable.

Martin Luther—in 2026

Defender of the Faith (and Enemy of Cheap Grace)

Epistle to the Weary Pilgrims: On the Great Exchange

To the Flock of God, scattered and burdened by the Taskmasters,

I write this final word not to the strong, but to the weak. Not to the "Fruit Inspectors," but to the fruit-less. Not to the builders of empires, but to the bruised reeds who fear they are about to be broken.

I hear you weeping in the night. I know your terror because it was my terror. You look at the Law of God, which demands a heart that loves Him perfectly, and then you look at your own heart, which is cold, distracted, and prone to wander. You hear the preachers screaming, "*If you do not have works, you are lost!*" and you tremble, because you know your works are stained with pride.

Children of God, lift up your heads! I have found the Key that unlocks the iron gate of despair. It is not found in your righteousness. It is found in the **Great Exchange**. Imagine two sacks. In one sack is all your sin, your failures, your cold prayers, and your "filthy rag" righteousness. In the other sack is the perfect, radiant, infinite holiness of Jesus Christ—His obedience to the Father, His love, His suffering, and His spotless life.

On the Cross, a trade was made. God took the sack of your sin and placed it on the shoulders of His Son. Jesus did not just *carry* it; He became it. He was crushed for it. He drank the cup of wrath that you deserved, down to the dregs, until He cried, "*It is finished!*"

But that is only half the Gospel! The Lordship preachers stop there and tell you to get to work. Nay! The Exchange is double! At the moment you believed and were washed, God took the sack of Christ's righteousness and placed it on *your* shoulders. He did not just lend it to you; He **imputed** it to you. He wrote it in the Book of Life under *your* name.

Do you understand what this means? It means that when the Father looks at you, He does not see a struggling sinner trying to get better. He sees the perfection of His own Son! You are as righteous as Jesus is, not because you behave like Him, but because you are wearing Him.

This is **Alien Righteousness**. It is "Alien" because it does not grow in your garden; it comes from Heaven. If you rely on the righteousness that grows in you (your sanctification), you will always be uncertain, for it is always changing. But if you rely on the righteousness that covers you (Justification), you are as safe as the Son of God Himself.

So, stop looking at your hands to see if they are clean. Look at **His** hands, which were pierced for you. Stop climbing the ladder to heaven; Jesus has come down to carry you up. Rest, little flock. The work is done. The debt is paid. The garment is purchased. Put it on and rejoice, for you are beloved.

Martin Luther—in 2026

A prisoner of the Lord, set free by the Blood.

The Conclusion of the Whole Matter

The Galatian Warning

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, using the wisdom the Apostle Paul gave us in the book of Galatians. Paul exposed the motives of the legalists in Galatians 6:13, saying, "For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh." This is the fatal flaw of every system that adds works to grace: the teachers of the Law do not actually keep the Law themselves.

That is the point we must drive home regarding men like Paul Washer and John MacArthur. Outwardly, they have a pretty good appearance before the world; they are respectable, disciplined, and religious. But if we judge them by the standard of God's Law—which is perfection—they are sinners just like you and me. How do I know this? Because they are not Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the only One in history who has never sinned. He is the only One who meets the standard of the "Good Tree" that cannot bring forth evil fruit. For Paul Washer or John MacArthur to demand a level of "Lordship" perfection from their followers that they have not achieved themselves is the definition of hypocrisy. They are placing a yoke upon the necks of the disciples that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear.

The Blind Leading the Blind

Paul Washer is the founder of the HeartCry Missionary Society, and John MacArthur is the undisputed leader of the modern Calvinist movement. They command the respect of millions and oversee vast empires of ministry. Yet, when it comes to the consistency of the Gospel, they are running around like chickens with their heads cut off.

They are the blind leading the blind, stumbling over the stumbling stone of human merit. They are frantically trying to balance two things that cannot be balanced: the finished work of Christ and the unfinished work of man. They tell you to rest in Jesus, but then they hand you a checklist of requirements that destroys that rest.

They are trying to mix oil and water—Grace and Law—and they are confusing the flock in the process. They demand that you be a "Good Tree" that never sins, yet they go home and sin. They are setting a standard of verification that, if applied honestly, would disqualify even them from the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Sermon They Get Right

Here is the great irony: You could ask either John MacArthur or Paul Washer to preach a sermon on The Great Exchange, and they would likely do a magnificent job. In fact, their sermon on the technical mechanics of the Atonement might even be better than mine. They would eloquently explain that Jesus was sinless, that He took our place, and that He suffered the wrath of God for sin.

On this core point, we would be teaching almost the exact same thing, with one major exception. I teach that Jesus carried the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2), whereas these men, bound by their Calvinism, will only say He carried the sins of the "elect." But regarding the mechanism of substitution—that the Just died for the unjust—they know the truth, and they can preach it with power.

This is what makes them so dangerous. If they preached heresy 100% of the time, no one would listen to them. But because they can preach the Gospel correctly on Sunday morning, people lower their guard. The audience assumes that everything else they say must be consistent with that Gospel.

The Great Contradiction

The problem is that they spend the rest of their ministries contradicting that one sermon. After they step out of the pulpit from preaching "The Great Exchange," they revert right back to Rome. They switch from Imputed Righteousness (what Christ did) to Infused Righteousness (what the Spirit does in you).

They spend half a year preaching sermons that undermine the very Cross they just defended. They tell you that you are saved by Christ's work, but then they tell you that if you don't work hard enough, Christ's work doesn't apply to you. They build the foundation with Grace, but they try to build the walls with Law.

This leaves the audience in a state of perpetual confusion. They think the whole system is harmonious because the preacher uses Bible verses for both sides. They do not realize they are listening to two different religions fighting for control of the same pulpit.

The Final Choice

We must choose which message we will believe. Will we believe the sermon on The Great Exchange, where Jesus does it all? Or will we believe the sermons on Lordship Salvation, where we must prove we are worthy? We cannot believe both.

The Sentinel Project exists to cut through this confusion. We affirm the Great Exchange without the "Lordship" fine print. We affirm that Jesus paid it all, and that "all" means all. We do not need to add our "fruit" to His blood to make it effective.

Let us stop following the blind. Let us stop looking at the imperfect preachers who demand perfection. Let us fix our eyes on the only Good Tree, the only Sinless Savior, and the only One who kept the Law. The conclusion of the whole matter is this: Fear God, keep His commandment to believe on His Son, and rest in the finished work of the Cross

The Sovereignty Myth: Augustinianism or Manichaeism?

The Hidden Root of the Tree

Every house has a foundation, and every doctrine has a lineage. When we look at the modern structure of Calvinism, with its towering arguments about "Sovereignty" and "Predestination," we are often told that these ideas come straight from the Apostle Paul. We are told that to reject them is to reject the Bible itself. But if we dig beneath the surface, we find that the roots of this tree do not go back to Jerusalem, but to a very different place. They go back to a man named Augustine, and through him, to an ancient pagan religion that has poisoned the well of Christian thought for over 1,500 years.

We must begin our journey here because you cannot understand the fruit of Calvinism—teachings like *Limited Atonement* or *Unconditional Election*—without understanding the root. The debate that rages today is not new. It is a re-packaging of an ancient conflict that has confused believers for centuries. **To find the truth, we must be willing to look past the "traditions of men" and return to the simple, unvarnished testimony of the Scriptures.**

For centuries, theologians have presented us with a false choice. They tell us we must choose between two men: Augustine or Pelagius. They frame the debate as a war between "God's Grace" and "Human Pride." But this is a trap. It is a magician's trick designed to force you into one of two ditches. Today, we are going to look at a **Third Option**—the option that the Bible actually teaches—and in doing so, we will see that the "Sovereignty" taught by Calvinism is actually a philosophical myth imported from the pagan world.

The Man Who Painted God as Fate

To understand where the modern idea of "Sovereignty" comes from, we have to look at Augustine of Hippo. He is revered by Catholics and Protestants alike as a "Saint" and a "Doctor of the Church." John Calvin himself quoted Augustine more than any other source except the Bible, effectively building his theology on Augustine's shoulders. But who was Augustine before he became a bishop?

Before his conversion to Christianity, Augustine spent nine years as a "Hearer" in the religion of Manichaeism. This is a critical historical fact that is often swept under the rug. Manichaeism was a Gnostic religion that taught a dualistic view of the universe. They believed that there were two equal powers: a good god of light and an evil god of darkness. **Crucially, they believed in a form of "cosmic fatalism" or determinism.** They taught that human beings were pawns in this cosmic war, and that our actions—whether good or evil—were the result of these external forces acting upon us, not our own free will.

When Augustine converted to Christianity, he brought much of this philosophical baggage with him. He essentially "baptized" the fatalism of Manichaeism and called it "The Sovereignty of God." In his system, God replaced the cosmic forces of Fate. Instead of the stars or dualistic gods determining your destiny, Augustine taught that the God of the Bible unilaterally determines every

action, every sin, and every thought of every human being. He painted a picture of a God who micromanages the universe like a puppeteer controls a marionette. This was not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; this was the "Unmoved Mover" of Greek philosophy dressed up in biblical language.

The False Binary: Augustine vs. Pelagius

The great debate of church history is often framed as "Augustine vs. Pelagius." Let's look at what these two men actually taught, because the devil loves to give us two wrong answers and ask us to pick the "right" one.

Pelagius was a monk who was horrified by the lax morality he saw in Rome. He taught that human beings are born **inherently good** or at least neutral. He believed that Adam's sin affected only Adam, and that every baby is born with the same capacity for good that Adam had before the Fall. He argued that we can, by our own willpower, live sinless lives without the special intervention of God's grace. This, of course, denies the reality of the Fall and the necessity of the New Birth. Pelagius was wrong.

Augustine, in his zeal to refute Pelagius, swung the pendulum to the opposite extreme. He taught that because of Adam's fall, human beings are born **inherently evil**—a doctrine later termed "Total Depravity." He argued that babies are born guilty of Adam's sin and are a "mass of perdition." Because man is "dead" (which he interpreted as an inability to respond), God must unilaterally choose who will be saved and who will be damned, based on nothing but His secret, sovereign will. This leads to the terrifying conclusion that God creates billions of people for the express purpose of burning them in hell to show off His "justice." Augustine was also wrong.

Here is the tragedy: For 1,500 years, the church has been locked in a room with these two men, arguing over which one is right. The Calvinists shout, "We follow Augustine! Man is dead and helpless!" The Arminians and others shout, "We reject Augustine! We believe in free will!" often drifting dangerously close to Pelagius. **But neither man was right.** They were both blind men arguing over the description of an elephant, while missing the truth that stood right in front of them.

The Third Option: The Tree of Knowledge

The Bible does not teach that we are born "purely good" (Pelagius) nor does it teach that we are born "totally depraved" and unable to respond to God (Augustine). The Bible teaches a **Third Option**: We are born with the **Knowledge of Good and Evil**.

Let's go back to the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, something fundamental changed in human nature. God said, "*Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil*" (Genesis 3:22). This is the inheritance of the human race. We are not born as blank slates, nor are we born as unthinking monsters. **We are born with a conscience.** We are born with the capacity to understand the moral law of God written on our hearts, and the capacity to choose to violate it.

This reality is clearly seen in Romans chapter 2. The Apostle Paul speaks of Gentiles who "have not the law" (the written Torah) but who *"do by nature the things contained in the law"* (Romans 2:14). How is this possible if Augustine was right? If man is "totally depraved" and incapable of any good, how can a pagan Gentile do the things contained in the law "by nature"? Paul answers: *"Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness"* (Romans 2:15).

This proves that man retains a moral capacity. He knows the difference between right and wrong. He is fallen, yes. He is cut off from the Tree of Life, yes. He needs a Savior, absolutely. But he is not a "corpse" in the way Calvinists use the term. He is a rebel who knows the law of the King and chooses to disobey it. This distinction changes everything. It means that when God calls a man to repent, the man has the capacity to hear that call and the responsibility to answer it.

The Case of Cornelius: A Good Man Who Needed Saving

To illustrate this "Third Option," let us look at the biblical example of Cornelius in Acts chapter 10. Cornelius was a Gentile soldier, a centurion. He was not a Jew, and he was not yet a born-again Christian. Yet, the Bible describes him as *"a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway"* (Acts 10:2).

If Augustine and the Calvinists were right, Cornelius should not exist. A "totally depraved" man who is "dead in sins" and "hates God" should not be praying to God always. He should not be giving alms and fearing God. According to the Calvinist doctrine of *Total Depravity*, an unregenerate man is incapable of seeking God or doing spiritual good. Yet, here is Cornelius, seeking God with all his heart.

But was Cornelius saved by his goodness? No. This is where we must avoid the error of Pelagius. Despite his prayers and his alms, Cornelius was still lost. He needed to hear the Gospel. God sent an angel to tell him to send for Peter, who would tell him *"words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved"* (Acts 11:14).

This story perfectly destroys the false binary.

- **Against Pelagius:** Cornelius's good works did not save him. He needed the blood of Christ and the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost.
- **Against Augustine:** Cornelius was not "totally depraved" or incapable of responding to God. He was seeking God *before* he was saved, and God responded to that seeking by sending him the Gospel.

The truth lies in the middle. Man is a sinner who needs salvation, but he is a sinner with a conscience who can cry out for help. God's grace is the answer to that cry, not the force that programs the cry into a robotic vessel.

The Nightmare of Infant Baptism

Ideas have consequences. When you accept a false premise at the root, you will eventually grow poisonous fruit on the branches. One of the most tragic consequences of Augustine's "Total Depravity" doctrine was the invention of mandatory Infant Baptism.

Because Augustine believed that babies were born "guilty" of Adam's sin and were "masses of perdition," he concluded that unbaptized babies who died would go straight to hell (or later, a made-up place called "Limbo"). This terrified parents. It turned God into a monster who would torment an infant for a sin they never personally committed. To "fix" this theological problem, the church invented a ritual solution: wash away the "original sin" with water as soon as possible.

This led to the mechanical view of salvation that dominated the Dark Ages. Salvation became something the church "did" to you through a ritual, rather than a matter of faith and repentance. **But the Bible teaches that baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21).** It is for those who can hear, understand, believe, and repent. An infant cannot do these things.

The "Third Option" relieves us of this nightmare. We are born with the *nature* of Adam—the knowledge of good and evil—and we will inevitably sin when we reach the age of accountability. But we are not born with the *guilt* of Adam. **"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"** (Ezekiel 18:20). A baby has not sinned. A baby has no record in the Books of Deeds. God is just, and He does not condemn the innocent for the crimes of the father. The Augustinian view slanders the character of God, painting Him as a tyrant who creates kindling for hell out of cradles.

The Poison of "Sovereign" Determinism

When Calvinists use the word "Sovereignty," they mean something very specific. They do not just mean that God is the King and the ultimate authority—which is true. They mean that God *causally determines* everything. They believe, as Augustine taught, that God has scripted every rape, every murder, every lie, and every act of apostasy, and that He did so for His own glory.

They will tell you that if God does not control everything in this manner, He is not truly God. They will argue that if you have free will, you are robbing God of His power. **This is the "Zero-Sum" fallacy.** They imagine that for God to be big, man must be zero. They think that if man has the ability to choose, God has lost control of His universe.

But consider this: Which leader is more powerful?

1. The North Korean dictator who forces his citizens to praise him at gunpoint, scripting their every move and terrifying them into submission?
2. Or the confident King who gives his subjects freedom, allows them to rebel, and yet is so wise and powerful that He can weave their free choices—even their rebellion—into His ultimate plan and still achieve His victory?

The God of the Bible is the second King. He is not afraid of human free will. He is not threatened by your choice. He is so infinitely wise that He can allow the contest of wills to play out and still

ensure that His purpose stands. He allows sin and suffering not because He *causes* it, but because He is teaching the universe a lesson about the nature of good and evil. He is proving, on the stage of human history, that His way is life and rebellion is death.

If Augustine and the Calvinists were right—if God is essentially writing the script for both the hero and the villain, causing the sin and then punishing the sinner for it—then God is the author of sin. There is no way to escape this logical conclusion. **If I force you to pull a trigger, I am the murderer, not you.** Calvinism turns the Holy God into the ultimate criminal, all in the name of "Sovereignty".

Breaking the Chains of Tradition

We must have the courage to step out of the shadow of Augustine. We must have the courage to reject the traditions of the "Church Fathers" when those traditions contradict the plain nature of God revealed in Scripture.

You do not have to choose between being a Pelagian (believing you save yourself) or a Calvinist (believing you are a robot). You can stand on the solid ground of the Bible. You can believe that:

- You are a sinner by nature and choice.
- You cannot save yourself and need God's grace.
- But you are a person, created in God's image, with the terrifying and wonderful capacity to say "Yes" or "No" to the Creator.

The "Sovereignty" of Calvinism is a philosophical idol. It is a cold, deterministic machine built from the scraps of Manichaeian paganism. It offers a security that is false, because it tells you that your fate was sealed before you were born, regardless of your choices. But the God of the Bible offers a relationship. He says, *"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life"* (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Why would God ask you to choose if the choice had already been made for you? Why would Jesus weep over Jerusalem and say, *"How often would I have gathered thy children together... and ye would not!"* (Matthew 23:37) if He had secretly decreed that they *could* not come?

The answer is simple: **God is not a puppeteer.** He is a Father looking for children, not machines. He is looking for those who will love Him freely.

In the next chapter, we will take this concept further. We will look at the specific nature of God's perspective—how He sees time, the future, and your life—and we will use a simple parable to expose the arrogance of those who claim to have "figured out" the mind of God with their systematic theology. We will confront the "Elephant in the Room."

The Elephant in the Room: God's Perspective vs. Man's Logic

The Parable of the Blind Men

There is an ancient story that perfectly illustrates the problem with systematic theology. It tells of three blind men who had heard of elephants but had never encountered one. Curious to understand this strange beast, they asked to be led to one so they could touch it and learn its nature.

The first blind man approached the animal and placed his hands on its broad, sturdy side. He immediately nodded with confidence. "I understand now," he declared. "The elephant is like a wall—flat, solid, and immovable."

The second blind man reached out and grabbed the elephant's tusk. He recoiled in surprise. "No, you are mistaken," he corrected. "The elephant is nothing like a wall. It is round, smooth, and sharp. The elephant is clearly like a spear."

The third blind man reached out and seized the elephant's trunk, which twisted and curled in his grip. "You are both fools," he scoffed. "The elephant is not a wall, nor is it a spear. It is long, flexible, and moves on its own. The elephant is like a snake."

The three men began to argue. Each was absolutely convinced he was right because his experience was real. He had touched the truth, or so he thought. They shouted at one another, unable to agree, because each man was trying to define the whole by the tiny part he could perceive.

This is the story of Calvinism.

For centuries, theologians like Augustine and Calvin have touched one aspect of God's nature—His power or His foreknowledge—and built an entire system around it. They felt the "wall" of God's sovereignty and declared, "God controls everything like a wall! Man has no free will!" They missed the trunk and the tusk. They tried to define the infinite God through the limited lens of human logic, and in doing so, they created a caricature of the Almighty. **They mistook their limited perspective for the whole picture.**

The Box of Time vs. The Eternal Now

To understand where Calvinism goes wrong, we have to understand the difference between *our* timeline and *God's* eternity. We live in a box called Time. We experience reality as a sequence: yesterday is gone, today is here, and tomorrow is a mystery. We are trapped in the "now," moving forward one second at a time.

But the Bible tells us that God is not like us. He is the *High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity* (Isaiah 57:15). God is not stuck in the box with us. He is outside the box, looking at the entire parade of history from beginning to end. **He is the Alpha and the Omega.**

God exists in the "Eternal Now." This means that for God, the moment of creation, the crucifixion of Christ, and the Great White Throne Judgment are all present before Him. He sees the end from the beginning, not because He guessed it, and not necessarily because He forced it, but because He *is* there. He encompasses the past, the present, and the future simultaneously.

This is a concept that breaks the human brain. We cannot truly comprehend it because we have never experienced it. **Not even the angels can fully understand God.** Angels are created beings; they learn and experience time linearly, just as we do. Only God possesses the attribute of being everywhere—in all places and in all times—at once.

The Calvinist makes a critical error here. He tries to drag God down into the box of time. He assumes that because God *knows* what will happen tomorrow, He must have *scripted* it like a movie director scripts a scene. But Foreknowledge is not the same as Causation. **Just because I see a car crash happening from a helicopter does not mean I caused the driver to swerve.** God sees the choices men make in the future because He is already there, witnessing them. He does not have to force you to sin in order to know you will sin.

The Director, The Audience, and The Robot

Let's look at two ways to view God's relationship with history.

View #1: The Calvinist Director. In this view, God is like a movie director or a screenwriter. He writes every line of dialogue. He decides exactly when the villain will stab the hero. He decides exactly who falls in love and who dies of cancer. The actors on the screen (us) are essentially robots or puppets. We may *feel* like we are making choices, but we are just reciting lines that were written for us before the world began. If a man rapes a woman, the Calvinist view ultimately forces us to conclude that the Director wrote that scene and commanded the man to do it for "His glory." This is the logical end of "Sovereign Determinism."

View #2: The Wise Creator. In this view, God is the Author of the story, but He has written *free will* into the characters. He is so infinitely wise that He can allow His characters to make real choices—even choices that rebel against Him—and yet He still ensures the story ends exactly how He planned. He is not threatened by their freedom. He does not have to turn them into robots to maintain His power. He observes their choices from His vantage point in eternity and weaves those free actions into His master plan.

God has the power to control us like robots. He is all-powerful; He *could* stop every sin the moment it starts. He *could* force every human to bow down and worship Him right now. **But He doesn't.** Why?

Because the last 6,000 years are a school. God is teaching the universe—both angels and men—a lesson about His nature. He is proving that He is not a tyrant who forces affection. He is demonstrating that love must be freely given to be real. If He scripted our love, it would be as hollow as a doll saying "I love you" when you pull a string. God wants children, not dolls.

The Illustration of Suffering: A Personal Perspective

The most difficult question in theology is the "Problem of Pain." If God is good and all-powerful, why does He allow suffering? Why does He allow a child to die? Why does He allow disease to ravage a faithful believer? The Calvinist answer is often cold comfort: "God ordained it for His glory." They effectively blame God for the disease.

But let's look at this from the perspective of Eternity.

My grandmother suffered from Alzheimer's disease for seven long, agonizing years. We watched her slow decline, the loss of her memory, and the pain of her condition. It was a tragedy. From our limited human perspective—the blind man touching the elephant—it looked like God had abandoned her. We cried out, "Why is this happening? Where is God?"

But remember the attributes of God. He exists in the past, present, and future simultaneously.

- While my grandmother was suffering in that nursing home, God was there with her, holding her hand in the midst of her confusion.
- **At the exact same moment**, from His eternal perspective, God was also with her as a little girl, laughing and playing before the disease ever touched her.
- **And at the exact same moment**, God was with her in the future, on the New Earth, where she is young, vibrant, and fully restored, worshipping Him in perfect joy.

For God, the seven years of suffering were like a single grain of sand in an hourglass of eternity. He did not cause the disease—sin and the curse of a fallen world caused the disease. But He was present through it, and He saw the glory that would follow it.

The Calvinist looks at the suffering and says, "God caused this." The Bible looks at the suffering and says, "God is with you in this, and He has already prepared the victory that comes after this." **Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.** Death is not a problem for Him because He has already conquered it. He sees the healed version of you while you are still weeping in the hospital room.

The Missing Puzzle Pieces

Imagine trying to put together a 5,000-piece jigsaw puzzle. You work on it for days, but you are missing 500 pieces right in the center of the picture. You can see the edges—God's holiness, man's sin, the need for a Savior—but the center is a blank space.

What do you do?

- Do you humble yourself and admit, "I don't have the full picture"?
- Or do you take out a pair of scissors and some cardboard, paint your own pieces, and force them into the gap?

Augustine and Calvin chose the scissors. They looked at the difficult questions of election and predestination and realized they didn't understand how God chooses men. They missed the central piece of the puzzle: **The Book of Life**.

Because they ignored or misunderstood the biblical doctrine of the Book of Life (which we will cover in the next chapter), they had to invent a system to explain how salvation works. They invented *Unconditional Election*. They invented *Limited Atonement*. They invented *Irresistible Grace*. These are the cardboard pieces they cut out to fill the gap.

But the pieces don't fit. The edges are rough. You have to twist scriptures to make them snap into place. You have to redefine "world" to mean "elect." You have to redefine "all men" to mean "some men." You have to ignore the verses that say "whosoever will." **A true theology does not need to force the pieces.** When you find the right piece—the biblical truth of the Book of Life—it slides into place effortlessly, and the picture becomes clear.

The School of the Universe

We must realize that we are students in a cosmic classroom. The Bible is written to help us understand God, but we must accept that His ways are higher than our ways.

God allows sin to exist. He allows Satan to roam the earth. He allows wicked men to plot and scheme. **Allowing sin is different from causing sin.** God permits these things because He is proving a point to the principalities and powers. He is showing that His way—the way of love, obedience, and free will—is the only way that leads to life. He is allowing evil to run its course so that when He finally destroys it, no one in the universe will ever wonder, "What if we had tried it Satan's way?"

We have seen Satan's way. We have seen the bloodshed, the misery, and the death that comes from rebellion. And we have seen God's way in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Calvinist doctrine short-circuits this lesson. By claiming God controls both sides of the chessboard—moving the white pieces of righteousness and the black pieces of sin—they turn the universe into a meaningless game of solitaire. If God causes the sin He punishes, justice is dead.

Humility Before the Elephant

We are like the blind men. We touch a verse that says "God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world," and we say, "Aha! It's all pre-determined! It's a wall!" Then we touch a verse that says "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," and we say, "No! It's free will! It's a snake!"

The truth is the whole elephant.

- Yes, God knows the future (The Wall).
- Yes, man has free will to choose (The Snake).

- Yes, God has a plan that cannot be stopped (The Spear).

These truths are not contradictory; they are only contradictory in our limited, finite minds. God is big enough to be Sovereign *and* to give you the dignity of choice. He is big enough to know your ending without forcing your beginning.

The key to unlocking this mystery is not found in the philosophy of Augustine. It is found in a specific book mentioned throughout the Scripture—a book that was written before the world began, yet is edited as history unfolds. It is the "Book of Life."

In the next chapter, we will examine this book. It is the "Calvinist Killer." It is the single biblical doctrine that proves, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the rigid determinism of John Calvin is false. It proves that names can be written, and names can be removed. And if a name can be removed, Calvinism falls.

The Book of Life: The Calvinist Killer

The One-Punch Knockout

In the sport of boxing, fighters often dance around the ring for twelve rounds, trading jabs and seeking an advantage on points. But occasionally, a fighter lands a single, devastating blow—a knockout punch that ends the contest instantly. There is no need for judges, scorecards, or debate. The fight is over because one opponent is on the canvas and cannot rise.

In the long, exhausted debate over Calvinism, theologians have sparred for centuries. They argue over Greek participles, historical contexts, and the philosophical definitions of "will" and "sovereignty." They write thousand-page systematic theologies that act as shields to deflect the plain reading of Scripture. **But there is one doctrine in the Bible that acts as a theological knockout punch.** It is a doctrine so clear, so undeniable, and so devastating to the Calvinist system that most Reformed apologists simply ignore it.

That doctrine is the **Book of Life**.

If you understand what the Bible teaches about this specific book—when names are written in it and how names are removed from it—you will realize that Calvinism cannot be true. The two concepts are mutually exclusive. You cannot hold to the "Unconditional Election" of John Calvin and the "Book of Life" of the Apostle John at the same time. One of them must be false. **Today, we will open the Scriptures and see why the Book of Life is the Calvinist Killer.**

What is the Book of Life?

To understand this argument, we must first define what the Book of Life is according to the Bible, not according to tradition. Many modern evangelicals believe that the Book of Life is a registry of people who get saved. They have been taught that when you walk down an aisle, say a sinner's prayer, or get baptized, God picks up a pen and "adds" your name to the Book of Life.

This is biblically incorrect.

The Bible explicitly states that names were written in the Book of Life *before* the world began. In Revelation 17:8, we are told about those *"whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world."* This implies that the writing of names occurred at the very beginning, consistent with God's foreknowledge.

God, in His infinite wisdom, knew every person who would ever be conceived. He knew them by name before they were formed in the womb. And because God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), He made provision for humanity. **The Book of Life is the record of God's desire for life.** It is the "Lamb's Book of Life", tied to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who was the *"Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"*.

So, we establish the first pillar of truth: **Names are in the book from the start.** This aligns with the idea that God's plan was always redemption. But now we must look at the second pillar—the pillar that collapses the entire Calvinist temple.

The Blotting Out: The Fatal Flaw of Calvinism

The central pillar of Calvinism is the "Perseverance of the Saints," often called "Once Saved, Always Saved." It relies on the doctrine of "Unconditional Election"—the idea that God selected a specific group of people to be saved, and that this choice is irrevocable. If God chose you, you *will* be saved, and you *cannot* lose that salvation.

If this were true, it would be impossible for a name to ever be removed from the Book of Life. If you were "elected" before time began, your name stays there forever. If you were not elected, your name was never there to begin with. **Therefore, in a Calvinist universe, no eraser is ever needed.**

But what does the Bible say?

Psalms 69:28 *"Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous."* Here, King David is praying against his enemies. He asks for them to be *blotted out*. You cannot blot out a name that was never written. This verse proves that wicked men—enemies of God—had their names in the book at one point.

Exodus 32:32-33 Moses, pleading for the sinful Israelites who worshipped the golden calf, asks God to forgive them. He says, *"Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."* And the LORD said unto Moses, *"Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."* God Himself declares that He uses an eraser. He does not say, "Moses, that's impossible, you are one of the elect." He says that sin is the cause for removal.

Revelation 3:5 Jesus, speaking to the church at Sardis, makes a promise to the overcomer: *"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life..."* Why would Jesus promise *not* to blot out a name if blotting out was impossible? A promise of security is meaningless if there is no danger. When I tell my son, "I will not let you drown," it implies that drowning is a possibility if I do not intervene. Jesus is warning the church that failing to overcome—failing to remain faithful—could result in their name being removed.

Revelation 22:19 *"And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life..."* This is the final warning of the Bible. A man can have a "part" in the Book of Life and have it taken away by God as a judgment for tampering with His Word.

The Logic That Destroys T.U.L.I.P.

Let us apply these verses to the five points of Calvinism (TULIP) and watch the system crumble.

1. Unconditional Election (Refuted) Calvinism teaches that God chose the "Elect" based on a secret, sovereign decree that has nothing to do with their behavior or choices. But Exodus 32:33 says, *"Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out."* The retention of the name is conditional. It depends on obedience and the forgiveness of sin. If a name can be written and then blotted out, then "Election" is not a static, unchangeable status. It is a relationship that must be maintained through faith.

2. Limited Atonement (Refuted) Calvinism teaches that Jesus only died for the elect. If your name is in the Book of Life, He died for you. If it isn't, He didn't. But we just saw that wicked men (Psalm 69) and idolaters (Exodus 32) had their names in the book initially. This means God made provision for them. **He intended for them to be saved.** Their names were there! This proves that the Atonement was sufficient for all, even those who ultimately reject it and are blotted out.

3. Irresistible Grace (Refuted) Calvinism teaches that if God calls you, you must come. But the existence of the "Blotting Out" mechanism proves that God's initial grace (writing the name) can be resisted and rejected by man's final rebellion (sinning against Him). God started writing their story, but they chose to end it in rebellion.

4. Perseverance of the Saints (Refuted) This is the most obvious contradiction. A "Saint" (someone with their name in the book) can sin against God and be blotted out. The warning in Revelation 3:5 to the church—to actual believers—makes no sense if they are automatically guaranteed to persevere. The axe is laid at the root of the tree. If the tree does not bear fruit, it is cut down. It is not "once a tree, always a tree." It is "bear fruit or burn."

The Tale of Two Books

To fully grasp this, we must understand that the Book of Life does not exist in a vacuum. The Bible speaks of **books** (plural) being opened at the judgment.

"And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Revelation 20:12)

There is the **Book of Life** (The Lamb's Book), and there are the **Books of Deeds** (The Record of Works). This explains the mechanism of salvation and judgment perfectly.

1. **The Book of Life:** Contains your name. It represents your citizenship in heaven, granted by God's desire and Christ's blood.
2. **The Books of Deeds:** Contain the record of every sin, every idle word, and every wicked act you have ever committed.

Here is the terrifying reality: **Your sins are recorded.** If you die with your sins recorded in the Books of Deeds, those sins act as legal evidence against you. God, who is Holy, cannot allow a sinner into His Kingdom. Therefore, if the Books of Deeds show unrepented sin, your name is

blotted out of the Book of Life. You are cast into the Lake of Fire, not because God arbitrarily hated you, but because your own works condemned you.

But there is Good News. This is where the Gospel shines brighter than the cold logic of Calvinism. If you repent and believe the Gospel, and are baptized for the remission of sins, something miraculous happens. **The blood of Jesus washes your record clean.** *"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."* (Isaiah 43:25).

When you are washed in the blood, the **Books of Deeds** are wiped blank. There is no evidence against you. And because there is no evidence against you, your name **remains** in the Book of Life. You are saved not by your works, but by the absence of your bad works, removed by Christ!

The Blotting Out of Sin vs. The Blotting Out of Names

Notice the beautiful symmetry:

- God wants to **blot out your sins** from the Books of Deeds.
- If you refuse to repent, God must **blot out your name** from the Book of Life.

You have a choice. One of them must be blotted out. Either your sins go, or you go. Calvinism obscures this choice. It tells you that God decided eons ago whether you go or stay, and that you are a passive observer. It tells you that if you are "Elect," your sins were never really a threat to your standing. But the Bible screams a warning: **Repent, or you will be blotted out.**

Consider the warning of John the Baptist to the Pharisees. These men thought they were the "Elect." They were the children of Abraham. They had the covenant. But John looked them in the eye and said, *"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire"*. He was telling them: "You are in the book now (as Abraham's seed), but the axe is swinging. If you don't repent, you will be cut off."

This is why Paul warns the Gentiles in Romans 11 not to boast against the Jews. He says, *"Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee"* (Romans 11:20-21). You can be grafted in (written in the book) and you can be cut off (blotted out). This is the consistent testimony of Scripture from Exodus to Revelation.

The Myth of "Added at Conversion"

We must address a common error in the evangelical church. Many preachers teach that when you get saved, the angels break out a pen and write your name in the Book of Life. **The Bible never says this.** There is not a single verse in the King James Bible that speaks of a name being *added* to the Book of Life at conversion. Every reference speaks of names being *written from the foundation of the world* or names being *blotted out*.

Why is this important? Because it proves that God's default desire is salvation for all. He started with a book full of names! He created man for fellowship. He did not create billions of people for the sole purpose of damning them. **He created them for life, and they choose death.** When a sinner rejects Christ, he is effectively saying, "Erase me." He is walking away from the heritage God prepared for him. This makes the tragedy of hell infinitely worse. Hell is not filled with people God hated; it is filled with people God wanted, who refused to have their sins washed away.

The Challenge to the Calvinist

If you are a Calvinist, or if you have been influenced by teachers like John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul, or James White, I ask you to pause and consider this argument. Do not run to your commentaries. Do not run to the "Institutes of the Christian Religion." **Run to the text.**

Read Revelation 3:5. Read Exodus 32:33. Ask yourself: *Is it possible for a name to be blotted out?* If the Bible says "Yes," then your system is broken.

- If a name can be removed, election is conditional.
- If a name can be removed, the atonement was provisional for that person.
- If a name can be removed, grace can be resisted.
- If a name can be removed, the saint must persevere to the end.

The Book of Life is the immovable rock that shatters the glass house of theological determinism. It restores the fear of God. It restores the urgency of repentance. And it restores the beauty of a God who truly desires that "*whosoever will*" may come.

You do not have to wonder if you are "Elect." You do not have to wonder if you were chosen in a secret lottery before time began. **Your name is in the book.** The question is not "Did God choose me?" The question is "Will I let Him wash my sins, or will I force Him to blot out my name?"

The choice is yours. The provision has been made. The blood has been shed. The water is ready. **Do not let your name be blotted out.**

The True Elect: Israel, The Church, and The Promise

The Stolen Word

Language is a powerful tool. If you can change the definition of a word, you can change the theology of a generation. The word "Elect" is perhaps the most hijacked word in the history of the church. When a modern Christian hears the word "Elect," his mind immediately jumps to the Calvinist definition. He thinks of a secret, invisible group of individuals whom God handpicked for heaven before the universe began. He thinks of a lottery where the winners get grace and the losers get justice. He wonders, often with trembling anxiety, "Am I one of the Elect?"

But if we strip away the layers of systematic theology and return to the Bible itself, we find a very different picture. **We do not find a secret club of pre-selected Gentiles.** Instead, we find a title that belongs primarily to a Nation and a Man.

In the Bible, "Election" is not about who gets to go to heaven; it is about who gets to bring the Messiah. It is not about *salvation from hell*; it is about *service to the world*. The Calvinist has taken a national and messianic title and turned it into an individualistic golden ticket. To understand the truth, we must walk through the Scriptures and trace the "Golden Thread" of the Promise. We must find out who the *True Elect* really is.

The Golden Thread: The Seed of the Promise

The story of the Bible is the story of a Promise. In Genesis 3:15, right after the fall of man, God made a prophecy. He promised that the "seed of the woman" would crush the head of the serpent. From that moment on, the history of the world became a narrowing funnel. God was looking for the specific line through which this Savior would come.

This selection process is what the Bible calls "Election." God chose Abraham out of all the men on earth. Why? Not just to save Abraham, but so that *"in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"* (Genesis 12:3). Abraham was elected to be the father of the vehicle—the nation that would carry the Messiah.

God then narrowed the line further. Abraham had two sons: Ishmael and Isaac. Both were sons of Abraham, but only one was the "Child of Promise." God *elected* Isaac and rejected Ishmael for this purpose. Does this mean Ishmael went to hell? No. God blessed Ishmael and made him a great nation. But Ishmael was not chosen to carry the Seed.

The funnel narrowed again. Isaac had twin sons: Jacob and Esau. Before they were born, God said, *"The elder shall serve the younger"* (Genesis 25:23). He chose Jacob and rejected Esau. This is the favorite verse of the Calvinist, who claims this proves God chooses individuals for heaven and hell before birth. **But look at the text.** God did not say, "The elder shall go to hell, and the younger shall go to heaven." He said the elder shall *serve* the younger. He was choosing the *lineage of the King*. He was choosing the nation (Israel) that would come from Jacob, over the nation (Edom) that would come from Esau.

This process continued until it reached a single tribe—Judah. Then a single family—Jesse. Then a single man—David. And finally, it culminated in the ultimate "Chosen One."

The Supreme Elect: Jesus Christ

If you want to know who the "Elect" is, look at Jesus. In Isaiah 42:1, God the Father speaks of the Messiah: *"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth..."* Jesus Christ is the Elect of God. He is the Chosen One. He is the one God selected from before the foundation of the world to be the Savior, the King, and the High Priest.

This changes everything. **We are not chosen in ourselves; we are chosen in Him.** Ephesians 1:4 says, *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world..."* Notice the preposition. We are not chosen *separately* or *individually* in a vacuum. We are chosen *in Him*. Think of it like a ship. God chose the Ship (Christ) to sail to heaven. He elected the Ship to make the voyage safely. If you want to be "elected," you must get on the Ship. You are not the Ship; you are a passenger. Your "election" is derived entirely from your position in Christ. If you are in Christ, you share in His election. If you are outside of Christ, you are non-elect.

The Calvinist wants you to believe that God chose the passengers before He built the Ship. But the Bible teaches that God chose the Captain and the Vessel, and issues a "Whosoever Will" invitation to board. The security is in the Vessel, not in the passenger list.

Israel: The Elect Nation

Before Christ came, who held the title of "The Elect"? It was not a scattered group of individuals; it was a specific nation. Isaiah 45:4 says, *"For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name..."*

Throughout the Old Testament and the Gospels, "The Elect" is synonymous with **National Israel**. When Jesus speaks of the "Elect" in Matthew 24, warning that false christs could *"deceive the very elect,"* He is speaking to Jews about Jewish tribulation and Jewish prophecy. He is warning the chosen nation.

This context is vital. When we read the New Testament, we see a conflict. The Jews (the Elect nation) had rejected the Messiah (the Elect Man). Because of this rejection, the "Elect" status was in crisis. How could the chosen people reject the Chosen One? And more shockingly, how could God open the door to the "dogs"—the Gentiles?

This is the tension that leads us to the most controversial chapter in the entire Bible: Romans Chapter 9.

Decoding Romans 9: The Calvinist Fortress

If you listen to a debate involving a Calvinist like Dr. James White, he will almost immediately run to Romans 9. This is their fortress. They believe this chapter teaches that God creates "vessels

of wrath" (individuals) specifically to destroy them for His glory, and "vessels of mercy" (individuals) specifically to save them. They argue that this proves individual, unconditional predestination.

They are reading someone else's mail. They are reading a letter written about nations and applying it to individuals. They are reading a letter about the plan of history and applying it to the destiny of souls.

To understand Romans 9, you must read Romans 1 through 8 first. The entire book is about one subject: **Jews vs. Gentiles.**

- Chapter 1: The Gentiles are sinners.
- Chapter 2: The Jews are sinners too.
- Chapter 3: All are under sin; the Law cannot save.
- Chapter 4: Abraham was justified by faith, not law.
- Chapters 9-11: What about Israel? If salvation is by faith, has God's promise to the Jews failed?

In Romans 9, Paul is answering a Jewish objection. The Jews are saying, "We are the seed of Abraham! We are the chosen ones! How can you say we are cut off and these filthy Gentiles are saved?" Paul answers by giving them a history lesson on **God's right to choose.**

1. Isaac vs. Ishmael / Jacob vs. Esau Paul reminds them that being a physical child of Abraham isn't enough. God chose Isaac over Ishmael. He chose Jacob over Esau. Paul is arguing: *God has always had the right to define who His people are.* He is not locked into physical lineage. When Paul writes, *"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,"* he is quoting Malachi 1, written over a thousand years *after* the men died. Malachi is talking about the **Nations** of Israel and Edom, not the babies in the womb. God chose the nation of Israel for the covenant love (service), and He rejected the nation of Edom. It is a corporate election, not individual damnation.

2. Pharaoh and the Hardened Heart Paul brings up Pharaoh. *"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up..."* Calvinists love this. They say, "See? God made Pharaoh evil just to crush him." But look closer. God did not create Pharaoh wicked from birth. Pharaoh made his own choices to enslave God's people. God "raised him up" to the throne of Egypt at that specific moment in history. God used Pharaoh's *already hardened heart* as a tool to demonstrate His power. Paul is comparing the rebellious Jews to Pharaoh. He is saying: "You Jews are hardening your hearts against the Messiah just like Pharaoh did. And just like God used Pharaoh's rebellion to spread His fame, He is using your rebellion to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles!"

3. The Potter and the Clay *"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"* The Calvinist sees this as God making one

baby for heaven and one baby for hell. But Paul is referencing Jeremiah 18. In that passage, the Potter (God) is working with a *nation* (Israel). When the vessel is marred in His hand, He crushes it and re-shapes it. Paul is telling the Jews: "God is the Potter. Israel is the clay. You have become a stiff, rebellious vessel. God has the right to crush you (vessels of wrath fitting themselves for destruction) and make a new vessel that includes the Gentiles (vessels of mercy)." It is a defense of God's right to save Gentiles, not a decree of individual fatalism.

The Great Switch: From Lineage to Faith

The climax of Romans 9 is not "God saves who He wants and damns the rest." The climax is found in verses 30-32: *"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law."*

This is the key that unlocks the dungeon. Why was Israel (the chosen vessel) rejected? **Because they tried to earn it.** They sought righteousness by works. Why were the Gentiles (the non-chosen) accepted? **Because they sought it by faith.**

The "Election" shifted. The title of "God's People" was no longer determined by bloodline (who your father is). It was now determined by faith line (who your Savior is). John the Baptist warned them of this: *"Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham"* (Matthew 3:9). The "Stones" are the Gentiles. God is raising up a new family for Abraham, defined by belief in the Promise, not by DNA.

The True "Whosoever"

When we reclaim the word "Elect," the Gospel becomes beautiful again. We realize that God did not sit in eternity past and randomly select David Curtis for heaven and John Smith for hell. Instead, God selected **The Plan**. He selected **The Savior** (Jesus). He selected **The Method** (Faith). And He declared: *"Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed"* (Romans 10:11).

The Calvinist God is a micro-manager who scripts the destiny of puppets. The Biblical God is a King who built a Kingdom, opened the gates, and sent His heralds to the highways and hedges with a command: *"Compel them to come in."* He does not force them to enter. He draws them. He invites them. But they must walk through the door.

This is why the warnings in the New Testament are so severe. If you are "Elect" only because of a past decree, you are safe no matter what. But if you are "Elect" because you are *in Christ*, you must **abide** in Him. You must remain on the Ship. Paul warns the Gentile believers—the "wild olive branches" grafted in—that they should not be arrogant. *"For if God spared not the natural branches [the Jews], take heed lest he also spare not thee"* (Romans 11:21). You are part of the Elect body now. But if you stop believing, you can be broken off.

The Fruit of the Two Views

Ideas have consequences. The Calvinist view of Election breeds **Pride** or **Despair**.

- **Pride:** "I am special. God chose me and passed over my neighbor. I possess secret knowledge." This leads to the arrogance we often see in "Cage Stage" Calvinists who mock those who "don't understand the deep things of God."
- **Despair:** "What if I'm not chosen? I pray, I try, but I still struggle with sin. Maybe God never picked me." This leads to doubt and spiritual paralysis.

The Biblical view of Election breeds **Gratitude** and **Urgency**.

- **Gratitude:** "I was a wild stone, a dog of a Gentile, with no hope and no God. But Jesus Christ, the True Elect, died for me and opened the door. He grafted me into His family by grace."
- **Urgency:** "I must abide in Him. I must bear fruit. And I must tell my neighbor, because the door is open for him too. He is not locked out by a decree; he is only locked out by his own unbelief."

Conclusion: The Invitation Stands

Do not let a theologian steal your birthright. Do not let a system convince you that God's love is narrow and limited. The promise to Abraham was that *"in thy seed shall ALL nations of the earth be blessed."* Not a few people from all nations. All nations. The offer is universal. The "Elect" is Christ. If you want to be Elect, hide yourself in Him. Put your faith in His blood. Repent of your sins. Be baptized into His name. And then, walking in newness of life, you will be *"an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ"* (Romans 8:17).

The Calvinist asks: "Did God choose me?" The Bible asks: "Have you chosen Him?" The first question is a mystery you can never answer. The second question is a decision you can make today.

In the next chapter, we will leave the high towers of theology and go down into the dark cellar of "Total Depravity." We will ask the question: Is man truly a corpse? Is he unable to even ask for help? Or has the Calvinist confused "death" with "helplessness"? We will see that while a man cannot save himself, he can certainly scream for the Lifeguard.

Total Depravity vs. The Word of Life

The Corpse on the Slab: A Fatal Error

If you walk into a cold, sterile morgue and look at a dead body lying on a steel table, you know certain indisputable facts about it. That body cannot see the light. It cannot hear a symphony. It cannot taste a meal. If you scream at it, it will not flinch. If you offer it a million dollars, it will not reach out a hand to take it. It is dead.

This imagery is the stronghold of Calvinism. They open their Bibles to Ephesians 2:1, read the phrase "*dead in trespasses and sins*," and they interpret it with a literal, biological rigidity. They argue that a sinner is exactly like that corpse in the morgue. Because he is "spiritually dead," they claim he is utterly incapable of understanding the Gospel, incapable of desiring God, and—most importantly—incapable of believing, unless God first performs a miracle to bring him back to life.

This doctrine is known as **Total Depravity** or **Total Inability**. It forces the Calvinist to invent a theology called "Regeneration Precedes Faith." They teach that God must secretly zap the sinner with spiritual life (Regeneration) *before* the sinner can ever believe in Jesus. In their system, you are born again *so that* you can believe.

But this puts the cart before the horse. It disconnects the power of God from the method God explicitly chose. The Bible does not teach that God zaps people in a vacuum. The Bible teaches that the "zap" of life is contained within a specific delivery system. That system is the **Message of Forgiveness**.

The Mechanism of the "Zap"

How does a dead man come to life? This is the most important question in soteriology (the study of salvation). The Calvinist says the life comes from a secret, sovereign decree that bypasses the man's will and intellect. But Jesus Christ gave us the answer in **John 5:25**, and it destroys the Calvinist timeline.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

Look closely at the order Jesus establishes.

1. The Dead **Hear**.
2. The Hearers **Live**.

The Calvinist reverses this. They say, "The dead cannot hear because they are dead. Therefore, they must **Live** (be regenerated) so that they can **Hear**." Jesus says the opposite. He says the hearing comes *first*, and the life follows the hearing.

But how can a "dead" man hear? This is where the analogy of the physical corpse breaks down. A sinner is spiritually separated from God ("dead"), but he is not a physical rock. He has ears. He has a mind. He has a conscience. And most importantly, the Word of God is not just normal speech. **The Word of God is living and powerful** (Hebrews 4:12).

When the Gospel is preached, it is not just information. It is **Spirit**. Jesus said in John 6:63, *"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."* Do you see the mechanism? The Life is **in the Words**. God does not zap you and *then* speak to you. He speaks to you, and His Words carry the voltage of life into your soul. If you believe those words, the connection is made, and you are raised from the dead.

The Seed Must Come Before the Birth

Let's use another biblical analogy: **The Seed**. In 1 Peter 1:23, the Bible describes exactly how the New Birth (Regeneration) happens: *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."*

Peter says we are born again **by the Word of God**. The Word is the "seed" (Luke 8:11). Now, think about biology. Does conception happen *before* the seed is planted? Of course not. You cannot have a birth without a seed. You cannot have a pregnancy without conception. The seed must enter the womb *before* life can begin.

The Calvinist doctrine of "Regeneration Precedes Faith" is a biological impossibility. They are essentially claiming that a woman becomes pregnant *before* she receives the seed. They claim you are "born again" (regenerated) *before* you receive the Word of God by faith. This is absurd. The order of nature and the order of Scripture are the same:

1. **The Sower** (The Preacher) casts the **Seed** (The Word/Gospel).
2. The **Soil** (The Heart) receives the Seed.
3. **Life** springs forth.

If you reject the Seed—if you harden your heart and refuse to believe the Gospel—you remain dead. Why? Not because God refused to zap you, but because you refused the only thing that contains Life: **The Word**.

The Dynamite in the Message

The Apostle Paul understood this power perfectly. He did not walk into Rome hoping that God would randomly zap people so he could talk to them. He walked into Rome knowing he carried a weapon of mass reconstruction. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"* (Romans 1:16).

The word "power" there is the Greek word *dunamis*, from which we get **Dynamite**. The Gospel message *itself* is the dynamite. The Calvinist thinks the sinner is a stone wall, and the Gospel is a

feather. They think, "A feather can't break a wall! God must turn the wall into a sponge first!" But Paul says, "No, the Gospel is not a feather. The Gospel is a stick of dynamite!"

You don't need to soften the wall before you throw the dynamite. You throw the dynamite (preach the Gospel), and if the sinner receives it, the explosion of power destroys the old nature and brings new life. **Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God** (Romans 10:17). God has placed the triggering mechanism for eternal life inside the message of the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. When you hear that message—that your sins are forgiven, that the debt is paid, that the tomb is empty—the Holy Spirit uses *that specific news* to pierce your heart.

The Smoking Gun: Colossians 2:13

If there was any doubt left that Life comes *after* Forgiveness (and thus after Faith), the Apostle Paul settles it in Colossians 2:13. This verse is the "smoking gun" that disproves the Calvinist timeline.

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."

Look at the sequence.

1. **Dead in sins.** (The starting state).
2. **Quickened together with him.** (This means "Made Alive" or Regenerated).
3. **Having forgiven you all trespasses.**

In the Greek grammar (and clearly in the KJV English), the "quickening" (making alive) is inextricably linked to the "forgiving." You are made alive *because* you are forgiven. You cannot be "alive" and "unforgiven" at the same time. Life is the result of the debt being cleared.

Now, ask yourself this simple question: **When does a man get forgiven?** Does he get forgiven before he believes? Or after he believes? Acts 10:43 gives the answer: *"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."*

- Step 1: **Believe** (Faith).
- Step 2: **Receive Remission** (Forgiveness).

Now put it all together with Colossians 2:13:

- Step 1: **Believe** the Gospel.
- Step 2: **Receive Forgiveness** (Remission of sins).
- Step 3: **Be Quickened** (Made Alive/Regenerated) because you are forgiven.

The Calvinist tries to tell you that Step 3 happens first. They try to tell you that God Quickens an unbelieving, unforgiven sinner. **This is scripturally impossible.** God does not give eternal life to a man who is still in his guilt. He washes the guilt away *through faith*, and then Life rushes in to fill the clean vessel.

The Washing of Regeneration

This brings us to the practical application. How does this happen? It happens when the message of forgiveness meets the response of faith. This is why the Bible links regeneration to **washing**.

Titus 3:5 says, *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."*

Notice it calls it the "washing" of regeneration. It is a cleansing process. What washes us? **The Blood of Jesus.** When is the blood applied? **By Faith.** *"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood"* (Romans 3:25).

The Calvinist wants a regeneration without the blood. Think about that. If God regenerates you *before* you believe, He is regenerating you before you have faith in the blood. He is giving life to a dirty, unwashed soul. But the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit enters to "renew" and "regenerate" only when the blood has done its work. And the blood does its work when the sinner hears the Good News and trusts in it.

This is why the message of **Forgiveness** is central. You aren't zapped with generic "energy." You are zapped with the specific realization: *"My sins are gone! Jesus paid it all!"* That realization—that belief in the Good News—is the moment the Spirit resurrects the human spirit. The truth sets you free. You cannot be free (alive) until you know the Truth.

The "Cannot" vs. The "Will Not"

So what about those verses where Jesus says men "cannot" hear? John 8:43: *"Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word."* The Calvinist dances on this verse. "See! They are physically unable!"

But read the context. Why could they not hear? Was it because God forgot to zap them? No. Verse 44: *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."* They could not hear because they were morally committed to a different father. They were unwilling to accept a message that required them to humble themselves.

Their "inability" was not a lack of equipment; it was a **hostility of heart**. If I tell a thief, "Stop stealing," and he loves money more than honesty, he "cannot" hear me. Not because his ears don't work, but because his greed deafens him to righteousness. The cure for this deafness is not a mystical zap. The cure is the piercing power of the Law and the Gospel. Acts 2:37: *"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart..."* They heard. The Word pricked them. And *then* they asked, "What shall we do?"

The Cry for Help is the First Breath

When a baby is born, what is the first sign of life? **A cry.** The baby screams. It gasps for air. In the spiritual birth, the "Cry for Help" is the first breath of the new life. The Calvinist says, "A dead man can't cry." We answer: "The Gospel is the slap on the back that wakes the dead man up!"

When the Holy Spirit uses the Word to convict a sinner of his filth, and shows him the beauty of the Savior, that sinner is brought to a crisis point. The "Life" is hovering right there in the message. If the sinner responds—if he opens his mouth and breathes in the grace by saying, "Lord, save me!"—he is instantly born again.

The Calvinist wants you to believe you were born again *before* you cried. But the Bible shows us the Thief on the Cross. He was a dying, wicked man. He heard Jesus say, "*Father, forgive them.*" He saw the title "King of the Jews." The message of forgiveness and kingship entered his ears. He believed it. He cried out: "*Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*" And Jesus said: "*To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*"

The Thief wasn't regenerated so that he could ask. He asked, and in the asking (faith), he received the Life.

Conclusion: The Power is in the Good News

We must stop complicating the Gospel. Salvation is not a complex metaphysical process where God tinkers with your soul in the dark before you are aware of it. Salvation is a **Relationship**. It is a proposal of marriage. God the Father offers the Son to the Bride (Humanity). The Holy Spirit brings the proposal (The Gospel). A marriage does not happen by the Groom kidnapping an unconscious bride. It happens when the Bride hears the proposal, believes the Groom's love, and says, "I do."

God creates the life, yes. God gives the new heart, yes. God does 100% of the saving. But He does it **through the Gospel**. "*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day...*" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

That message is the lightning bolt. If you want to be zapped with life, don't wait for a feeling. Don't wait for a dream. **Look at the Cross.** Listen to the news of Forgiveness. Believe that He died for *you*. Believe that His blood paid for *your* specific sins. In that moment of belief, the circuit is completed, the power flows, and the dead man lives.

Unconditional Election vs. The Appointment to Condemnation

The Dark Side of the Coin

We have now arrived at the most terrifying room in the Calvinist house. Most modern Calvinists try to keep the door to this room locked. They prefer to talk about the "sweetness" of Election—how God chose His people and loved them before the world began. They smile and say, "Isn't it wonderful that God chose us?"

But logic demands an answer to a haunting question: **If God chose some to go to heaven, what did He do with the rest?**

If I walk into a pet store with ten puppies, and I choose to adopt three of them, I have, by definition, chosen to leave the other seven behind. In the Calvinist system, where God's choice is the *only* reason anyone is saved, His decision to *pass over* the non-elect is effectively a decision to damn them. This doctrine is called **Double Predestination** (or Reprobation). It teaches that just as God created some men for the specific purpose of salvation, He created other men for the specific purpose of damnation. He made them to burn. He designed them to be "vessels of wrath" to show off His power, much like a potter might make a vase just to smash it with a hammer.

Is this the God of the Bible? Is the God who says "*God is love*" (1 John 4:8) also a God who mass-produces humanity as kindling for the Lake of Fire? To answer this, we must look at the scary verses—the verses that speak of men being "appointed to wrath" and "ordained to condemnation." We will see that while God does indeed appoint men to hell, He never does so arbitrarily. **The appointment is a sentence for a crime, not a script for a life.**

Fitted for Destruction: Who Did the Fitting?

The Calvinist's primary evidence for Double Predestination is found in Romans 9:22: "*What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction...*"

The Calvinist reads this and says: "See? God made vessels of wrath. He fitted them for destruction just so He could show His wrath." But look closer at the text. First, notice the phrase "**endured with much longsuffering.**" If God created these men specifically to be evil so He could destroy them, why does He need "longsuffering" (patience)? You don't need patience with a robot you programmed to fail. You only need patience with a being that is resisting your will. The fact that God *endures* them proves they are acting contrary to His desire for them.

Second, look at the phrase "**fitted to destruction.**" In the Greek text, this verb is distinct from the verb used for the vessels of mercy. When Paul speaks of the vessels of mercy, he says God "*afore prepared*" them. God did the work. But when he speaks of the vessels of wrath, he says they are "*fitted*" (passive or middle voice). It implies they **fitted themselves** or were fitted by their own sin. God prepares the saved for heaven. The sinner fits himself for hell. God does not manufacture the sin; He simply passes the sentence on the sinner who refuses to repent.

Jude 4: Ordained to Condemnation

Another favorite verse for the fatalist is Jude 4: *"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness..."*

The Calvinist stops at "ordained." They say, "God ordained them to be condemned before they were born!" But read the description of the men.

1. **Ungodly men.**
2. **Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.**
3. **Denying the only Lord God.**

God did not ordain "John Smith" to condemnation. God ordained that **"Ungodly men who turn grace into lasciviousness"** shall be condemned. It is a **Class Action Decree**. Suppose a King issues a decree: "Any man found stealing sheep shall be hanged." Years later, a man steals a sheep. He is arrested and hanged. Was he "ordained to this condemnation" before he committed the crime? Yes! The decree was written years ago. But the decree didn't force him to steal the sheep. The decree simply established the penalty for the profile he chose to fit.

God has ordained from of old that those who reject the Light and turn grace into a license for sin will face condemnation. He predestined the *outcome* of the wicked; He did not force the individual to *become* wicked.

1 Peter 2:8: Appointed to Stumble?

Let us look at 1 Peter 2:8, another "problem passage." *"And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."*

Does this mean God appointed them to be disobedient? No. Look at the grammar. They stumble at the word, **being disobedient**. The appointment is to the *stumbling* and the *consequence*, not to the disobedience itself. God has established a fixed law in the universe: **If you disobey the Word, you will stumble**. He appointed that penalty. He set Jesus Christ as the Cornerstone. If you build on Him, you are saved. If you run into Him in disobedience, you are broken. God appointed Jesus to be a Rock of Offense to the rebellious. He guaranteed that the rebellious would fall over Him. But He did not force them to be rebellious. Their disobedience is the cause; the stumbling is the appointed effect.

The Mechanism of Delusion: 2 Thessalonians 2

This brings us to the most powerful rebuttal of Double Predestination in the New Testament. It is found in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. Here, we see exactly how and why God blinds a sinner.

"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess 2:10-12)

Trace the timeline carefully. It destroys Calvinism.

Step 1: The Truth is presented. (They had a chance to receive it). **Step 2:** They **"received not the love of the truth."** (Human rejection). **Step 3:** They **"had pleasure in unrighteousness."** (Moral preference for sin). **Step 4: "For this cause"** (Because of Step 2 & 3), God sends a strong delusion. **Step 5:** They are damned.

The Calvinist says God sends the delusion *first* (Step 4), which causes them to reject the truth. The Bible says they reject the truth *first*, and "for this cause" God sends the delusion to seal their fate. God's hardening is **judicial**. It is a punishment for previous rejection. He blinds the eyes of those who have already squeezed their eyes shut. He hardens the heart of Pharaoh only after Pharaoh has hardened his own heart against the command of God.

God Appoints the Sentence, Not the Crime

We must understand the difference between a **Legislator** and a **Puppet Master**. A Legislator writes the penal code. He writes, "Murderers shall be sentenced to death." In this sense, every murderer is "appointed to death" by the law before he ever picks up a weapon. But the Legislator does not put the gun in the man's hand and pull the trigger.

God is the Supreme Legislator. He has appointed the Lake of Fire for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). He has appointed that *"the fearful, and unbelieving... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire"* (Revelation 21:8). He has appointed the end from the beginning.

But He pleads with men not to fit themselves for that appointment. *"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"* (Ezekiel 33:11).

Listen to the heart of God in that verse. **"Why will ye die?"** If Calvinism were true, the answer would be: "Because You decreed it, Lord! We die because You made us vessels of wrath!" But God asks "Why?" implying that their death is unnecessary. It is a tragedy of their own making. He has provided a way of escape, but they will not take it.

The Book of Life Revisited

This brings us back to the Book of Life. As we saw in Chapter 3, the Book of Life contained the names of the wicked *at the foundation of the world*. This is the ultimate proof that God did not "appoint" them to hell before they were born. If God created a man specifically to be a vessel of wrath, why would He write that man's name in the Book of Life? Why would He give him a reservation in heaven, only to blot it out later? It makes no sense. The only view that fits the

Scripture is that God created every man for Life. He wrote their names down. He desires their salvation. But when that man grows up, rejects the light of conscience, rejects the witness of creation, and finally rejects the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God says, *"Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book"* (Exodus 32:33). The appointment to condemnation happens at the moment of final blotting out, not at the moment of conception.

Conclusion: The Tragedy of Hell

Hell is not a monument to God's "sovereign choice." Hell is a monument to man's "sovereign rebellion." The fires of hell are fueled by the rejected invitations of God. C.S. Lewis famously said, "The gates of hell are locked from the inside." While that is a poetic way of putting it, the biblical truth is even starker. Men go to hell because they love darkness rather than light (John 3:19).

The Calvinist doctrine of Reprobation slanders the character of God. It turns the Father of Lights into the Author of Darkness. It tells you that the reason your neighbor is lost is because God never wanted him saved. **Do not believe this lie.** Your neighbor is lost because he is a sinner who needs to hear the Truth. He is appointed to wrath *only if* he remains in disobedience. But the appointment can be broken! *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). That is the heart of God. The appointment to wrath is the default setting for the rebel, but the appointment to Salvation is the offer on the table for everyone.

God has not fixed the future in a way that makes your choices meaningless. He has fixed the consequences of your choices. Choose Christ, and you are appointed to Life. Choose Sin, and you are appointed to Wrath. The appointment is fixed; the choice is yours.

In the next chapter, we will dismantle the "L" in TULIP: **Limited Atonement**. We will ask the simple question: When the Bible says Jesus is the "Savior of the world," does it mean the world? Or does it mean "the world of the elect"? We will see that the blood of Christ was shed even for those who deny Him.

Limited Atonement: The Red Light of Heresy

The Ultimate Warning Signal

In the world of construction, there are minor code violations, and then there are structural failures that condemn a building. You can fix a leaky faucet or a crooked window. But if you tamper with the foundation—if you weaken the concrete that holds up the house—the building is unsafe. It must be condemned.

In theology, there is a similar distinction. Christians can disagree on many things: the timing of the Rapture, the style of worship, or the precise structure of church government. But there is one area where no tampering is allowed. There is one "Red Light" that, if flashing, warns you to run for your life. That area is **The Atonement**.

The moment a preacher, a denomination, or a theology starts messing with the **Blood of Jesus**—limiting its power, postponing its effect, or restricting its scope—you are no longer dealing with a "difference of opinion." You are dealing with a spiritual virus. You are dealing with what the Bible calls a *"damnable heresy."*

The "L" in Calvinism stands for **Limited Atonement**. It teaches that Jesus Christ did *not* die for the whole world. It teaches that His blood was *not* shed for every man. And by teaching this, Calvinism joins a long line of theological systems that have tried to rewrite the terms of the Cross. This chapter is your warning: Treat this doctrine like spiritual leprosy. Do not touch it. Do not entertain it.

Denying the Lord That Bought Them

The strongest warning in the New Testament against false teachers is found in **2 Peter 2:1**. It does not warn against people who wear the wrong clothes or sing the wrong songs. It warns against those who attack the Purchase.

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

Notice the specific crime: **"Denying the Lord that bought them."** To understand the gravity of Limited Atonement, you have to realize that it commits this exact crime.

1. The text says the Lord **bought** these false teachers. (The Greek word *agorazo* means to purchase in the marketplace).
2. The text says these men go to **destruction** (Hell).
3. Therefore, Jesus bought men who go to hell.

The Calvinist comes along and says: "No. Jesus only bought the Elect. If He bought you, you *cannot* go to hell. Therefore, He did not buy the false teachers." Do you see what they just did? They looked at 2 Peter 2:1—which explicitly says the Lord **bought them**—and they denied it. They are literally "denying the Lord that bought them." They are telling the reprobate, "The Lord didn't buy you." Peter says this is a **damnable heresy**.

When you look a lost sinner in the eye and tell him, "Jesus might not have died for you," you are stripping the Gospel of its power. You are denying the purchase price that God laid down for that man's soul.

The Unholy Thing: Insulting the Blood

The writer of Hebrews gives us another terrifying "Red Light" in **Hebrews 10:29**. *"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"*

This verse describes an apostate—someone who turns away from the truth. But notice how the Bible describes his relationship to the blood. It says he was "**sanctified**" by the blood of the covenant. The Calvinist doctrine of Limited Atonement says this is impossible. They teach that the blood never touches the non-elect. They teach that the blood is never applied, in any sense, to someone who ends up in punishment.

But God says this man was sanctified—set apart, brought into the sphere of covenant privilege—by the blood, and *then* he trampled it. To teach Limited Atonement is to look at this verse and say, "God is lying. That man wasn't sanctified. The blood wasn't for him." **This is tampering**. It is treating the blood as "common" or "limited" rather than infinite and sufficient. It is telling God that His supply was too small to cover the demand.

The Company They Keep: A Gallery of Errors

When you tamper with the Atonement, you join a very specific club. Throughout history, the most dangerous false religions have all centered their attacks on the finished work of Christ on the Cross. They all claim to be "Christian," but they all add a "Yes, but..." to the blood.

Let's look at the company Calvinism keeps when it limits the Atonement:

1. Roman Catholicism (The Tampering of Repetition) Rome teaches that the Cross was not enough. They believe that Christ must be "re-sacrificed" in the Mass every Sunday. They tamper with the **Finality** of the Atonement. They add human works, penance, and purgatory because they do not believe the blood *alone* finished the job.

2. Seventh-Day Adventism (The Tampering of Postponement) SDA theology teaches that the Atonement was not completed on the Cross. They teach that in 1844, Jesus entered the "Investigative Judgment" to finish the work. They even have a blasphemous doctrine where Satan

(the scapegoat) bears the final sins. They tamper with the **Timing** and **Sufficiency** of the Atonement.

3. Calvinism (The Tampering of Exclusion) Calvinism teaches that the Atonement was perfect, but it was **Selective**. They tamper with the **Scope** of the Atonement. They take the "World" out of John 3:16 and replace it with "The Elect." They take the "Whole World" out of 1 John 2:2 and replace it with "The Church."

All three of these systems are doing the same thing: They are putting human restrictions on the Divine Blood.

- Rome says: "The blood isn't enough to save you without the Church."
- SDA says: "The blood wasn't finished until 1844."
- Calvinism says: "The blood isn't for you unless you are on the list."

This is the mark of leprosy. When you see a theology that restricts the power, scope, or finality of the blood of Jesus, **stay away**.

The "World" Means The World

To defend this tampering, the Calvinist must rewrite the dictionary. They must convince you that "All" means "Some" and "World" means "Church." But the Bible is stubborn. It refuses to be rewritten.

1 Timothy 2:6 says Jesus gave Himself a *"ransom for all."* **Hebrews 2:9** says Jesus tasted death for *"every man."* **1 John 2:2** says He is the propitiation for *"the whole world."* **John 1:29** calls Him the *"Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."*

If God wanted to say "Elect," He knew the word. He used it in other places (Matthew 24:22, Colossians 3:12). But when it came to the Atonement, He used the widest possible terms. Why? Because **He wanted no confusion**. He wanted the drug addict, the murderer, the atheist, and the Pharisee to all look at the Cross and say, "That is for me." Limited Atonement robs the sinner of this assurance. It forces him to look inward for signs of election instead of looking outward to the Cross for salvation.

The Double-Talk of the Calvinist Offer

This doctrine forces the Calvinist preacher into a position of dishonesty. When a Calvinist stands in a pulpit and says to a mixed crowd, "God loves you and Jesus died for you," he is—according to his own theology—lying to the non-elect in the room. If Limited Atonement is true, God does *not* love the non-elect (He created them for wrath), and Jesus did *not* die for them.

So how do they justify the offer? They use "Double-Talk." They say, "Well, the offer is genuine because *if* they believed, they would be saved." But they also teach that the non-elect *cannot*

believe because God withheld the grace needed to believe. It is like offering a paralyzed man a million dollars if he will jump to the moon, knowing you have given him no legs and no rocket. It is a cruel mockery.

God is not a mocker. When Jesus stood with arms wide open and said, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden*" (Matthew 11:28), He meant it. He didn't check their ID cards first to see if they were on the list.

Conclusion: Do Not Enter

We started this chapter with a Red Light. If you are driving down a road and see a sign that says "BRIDGE OUT," you do not keep driving to see how bad it is. You turn around.

Limited Atonement is a "BRIDGE OUT" sign. It disconnects the world from the Savior. It disconnects the sinner from the promise. It disconnects the Bible from its plain meaning.

If you accept this doctrine, you are accepting a "different gospel" (Galatians 1:6). You are accepting a gospel where the Good News is only "Good News for the Lucky Few." Paul said about those who preach another gospel: "*Let him be accursed.*" Those are strong words. But they are necessary words. When men deny the Lord that bought them, they bring upon themselves swift destruction. Do not go down that road with them.

Jesus is the Savior of the World. He bought the field to get the treasure (Matthew 13:44). The treasure may be the believers, but He bought **the whole field** to get them. The price has been paid for every soul in the field. The tragedy of hell is not that the payment was missing, but that the payment was rejected.

In the next chapter, we will face the "I" in TULIP: **Irresistible Grace**. We will see that just as they tampered with the Blood (limiting it), they tamper with the Spirit (forcing it). We will show from Scripture that men can, and do, resist the Holy Ghost to their own destruction.

Irresistible Grace vs. Resisting the Holy Ghost

The Wedding with Chains

Imagine you are attending a wedding. The groom is standing at the altar, looking handsome and expectant. The music begins, and the doors swing open. But instead of a bride walking joyfully down the aisle, you see a woman in handcuffs being dragged toward the front by two large security guards. She is weeping, shaking her head, and trying to pull away. The groom smiles and says, "She has no choice. I have chosen her, and my love is irresistible."

Would you call that a marriage? Would you call that love? No. In any court of law, and in the court of human conscience, we would call that abduction. We would call it a violation. **Love, by its very definition, requires the possibility of rejection.** If you cannot say "No," your "Yes" means nothing. A robot programmed to say "I love you" does not love you; it is merely executing a script.

Yet, this is exactly what the Calvinist doctrine of **Irresistible Grace** teaches about God. The "I" in TULIP stands for the idea that when God decides to save a member of the "Elect," He releases a special kind of grace that cannot be resisted. He fundamentally rewrites the sinner's will—without the sinner's permission—so that they *must* come to Him. They argue that God is so sovereign that He drags the sinner to salvation, kicking and screaming if necessary, until the sinner "willingly" loves Him.

But the God of the Bible is not a kidnapper. He is a Lover who woos. He is a Father who calls. And tragically, He is a King who is often rejected. To teach that Grace is irresistible is to ignore the explicit testimony of Scripture, which shows us that men can, and do, resist the Holy Spirit to their own destruction.

The Martyr's Sermon: Acts 7:51

If you want to know if the Holy Spirit can be resisted, you only need to ask Stephen, the first Christian martyr. In Acts chapter 7, Stephen stands before the Sanhedrin—the religious leaders of Israel. He gives them a history lesson, tracing how God had dealt with their nation for centuries. And then, he concludes his sermon with a stinging accusation that cost him his life.

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." (Acts 7:51)

Read that verse again. Stephen explicitly accuses them of **resisting the Holy Ghost**. He does not say, "You are resisting the mere external call of the prophet." He says they are resisting the *Holy Ghost Himself*. The Greek word used for "resist" is *antiptō*, which means to fall against, to rush against, or to oppose actively. It is the picture of a man bracing himself against a gale-force wind and pushing back.

The Calvinist has a major problem here. If Grace is Irresistible, then the Holy Spirit was not trying to convert these men. But Stephen says they *were* resisting Him. This leaves the Calvinist with two bad options:

1. **The Spirit was trying to fail.** (He was "pretending" to call them, knowing they couldn't come). This makes God deceptive.
2. **The Spirit was trying to save them, but they resisted.** This destroys Irresistible Grace.

The Bible is clear: The Spirit was striving with them. He was convicting them. He was drawing them. But they were "stiffnecked." They locked their knees and refused to bow. **The resistance was real, and it was fatal.**

The Lament of Jesus: "I Would, but Ye Would Not"

The most heartbreaking verse in the Gospels might be Matthew 23:37. Jesus is standing over the city of Jerusalem—the city of the "Chosen People." He is weeping over their coming destruction. Listen to the clash of wills in His words:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Please dissect the grammar of that sentence. **God's Will:** *"How often would I..."* (I wanted to. I willed it. I desired to gather you for safety and salvation). **Man's Will:** *"...and ye would not!"* (You did not want to. You willed against it).

Who won this contest of wills? Did Jesus use His "Irresistible Grace" to override their refusal and gather them anyway? No. He says, *"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."* **Man won.** Man's stubborn "No" trumped God's gracious "Yes." This does not mean man is stronger than God. It means God has sovereignly decided to respect the boundaries of the human will. He has decided that He will not force chickens to come under His wing. If they choose to run into the rain and the storm, He will let them go, even though it breaks His heart.

If Calvinism were true, this verse would be a charade. Jesus would be weeping over people He had secretly decreed not to save. He would be saying, "I would have gathered you... but actually, I didn't give you the grace to come, so I guess I didn't really want to." That is a monstrous interpretation. Jesus wanted them. They refused. That is the tragedy of sin.

The "Drawing" vs. The "Dragging"

The Calvinist will immediately run to **John 6:44:** *"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."*

They pull out their Greek lexicons and proudly announce: "The word 'draw' is *helko*. It means to drag! It is the same word used for dragging a net of fish (John 21:6) or dragging a man into court (James 2:6). Therefore, God drags men to salvation!"

This is a classic example of the **Etymological Fallacy**—assuming a word always means its most physical definition regardless of context. Yes, *helko* implies force or power. But what *kind* of power? In John 12:32, Jesus uses the same word: "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw [helko] all men unto me.*"

Now we have a dilemma.

- If "draw" means "irresistibly drag," and Jesus draws **all men**, then **Universalism** is true. Everyone gets dragged to heaven.
- But we know everyone is not saved.
- Therefore, the "drawing" **cannot be irresistible**.

So what does it mean? It means **Attraction**. It is the drawing of a magnet, not the dragging of a chain. When a magnet is held over a pile of metal shavings, it exerts a powerful force on all of them. It "draws" them. But if one of those shavings is bolted to the table (anchored by stubborn pride and love of sin), it will resist the pull. The force is real. The desire of the magnet is clear. But the connection is not made.

God draws men through the beauty of the Cross, the conviction of the Spirit, and the promise of life. It is a powerful, compelling influence. But it is an influence that can be resisted by a heart that loves darkness rather than light.

The Tragedy of King Agrippa

The Bible gives us vivid examples of men who felt the "Draw" but resisted the Grace. Look at King Agrippa in Acts 26. Paul preaches a masterpiece of a sermon to him. The Holy Spirit is clearly moving in the room. The logic of the Gospel is piercing Agrippa's heart. Agrippa says to Paul: "*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*" (Acts 26:28).

Almost. The Greek implies, "In a little bit, you would persuade me." He was teetering on the edge. The grace was there. The light was shining. But he pulled back. He resisted. If Grace were Irresistible, "Almost" would not exist. You are either dead (feeling nothing) or alive (conquered). There is no middle ground of "Almost Persuaded." But millions of souls are in hell today who were "Almost Persuaded." They felt the tug. They grasped the pew in front of them until their knuckles turned white. They wept during the invitation. And then... they said "No." They walked out the doors, and the feeling faded. They resisted the Holy Ghost.

The Danger of Hardening the Heart

Because Grace is resistible, the Bible is filled with urgent warnings not to resist it. **Hebrews 3:7-8:** *"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation...)"*

Why would the Holy Ghost warn you not to harden your heart if: A) You are Non-Elect, and you have no choice but to be hard? B) You are Elect, and God will soften your heart no matter what you do?

The warning implies **capability**. You have the power to hear His voice, and you have the power to respond by hardening yourself. The word "Harden" (Greek *skleruno*) describes a process. It is like calluses building up on a worker's hands. The first time you hear the Gospel, the skin is tender. You feel the prick. If you say "No," a thin layer of callus forms. The next time, you feel it less. Eventually, the heart becomes "past feeling" (Ephesians 4:19).

This is why "Irresistible Grace" is such a dangerous doctrine. It tells people, "Don't worry about your resistance. If you are Elect, God will break through eventually." **No, He might not.** God says, *"My spirit shall not always strive with man"* (Genesis 6:3). There is a line. There is a point of no return. You can resist the Spirit so many times that He stops drawing. You are not "Non-Elect" from birth; you are **Reprobate** by choice.

The Unpardonable Sin: The Final Resistance

This brings us to the terrifying concept of the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Matthew 12:31). Jesus warns that all sins can be forgiven, except this one. What is this sin? It is the final, total, and permanent rejection of the Holy Spirit's testimony regarding Jesus Christ. It is calling the Spirit of Truth a liar (or a devil).

If Grace were Irresistible, the Unpardonable Sin would be impossible for the Elect (because they *must* believe) and irrelevant for the Non-Elect (because they are damned anyway). But Jesus warns the Pharisees—religious men who knew the Bible—that they were in danger of crossing this line. They were seeing the miracles. They were feeling the conviction. And they were attributing the work of God to Satan to protect their own pride. They were resisting the Light until the Light became darkness to them.

God Wants Volunteers, Not Conscripts

Ultimately, the doctrine of Irresistible Grace fails because it misunderstands the goal of God. God is building a Kingdom of **Sons and Daughters**, not a factory of machines. He wants a relationship based on **Faith**. Faith, by its very nature, requires the freedom to doubt and the freedom to reject.

If I hold a gun to your head and say, "Give me your wallet," and you give it to me, have you been generous? No. If God holds His omnipotent power over your will and says, "Give me your heart," and you give it to Him because you have no other option, have you loved Him? No.

God wants your "Yes" to cost you something. He wants your "Yes" to be a surrender of your rebellion. He provides the power. He provides the cross. He provides the drawing Spirit. But He

leaves the final dignity of the choice to you. *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him..."* (Revelation 3:20). **He knocks.** He does not kick it down. The handle is on the inside.

Conclusion: Do Not Resist

The error of Irresistible Grace is that it makes you passive. It makes you think salvation is something that happens *to* you, like getting hit by a bus. The Truth is that salvation is a hand offered to a drowning man. The drowning man cannot save himself (he can't swim to shore). But he can **bite the hand that saves him.**

If you are reading this and you feel a tug in your chest—a sense that you are a sinner and Jesus is the answer—**that is the Holy Ghost.** He is drawing you. He is wooing you. But He is not forcing you. You have the terrifying power to push that feeling away. You can turn on the TV. You can laugh it off. You can go deeper into sin. And if you do, the drawing will get weaker.

Do not gamble on "Irresistible Grace." Do not wait for God to tackle you. **Yield.** Stop resisting. Drop your weapons. Open the door. The Grace is available, but it is not inevitable.

In the final doctrinal chapter, we will examine the "P" in TULIP: **Perseverance of the Saints.** We will look at the dangerous teaching of "Once Saved Always Saved" and contrast it with the biblical reality of the Book of Life. We will ask: Can a branch be broken off the Vine? Can a name be blotted out?

Perseverance of the Saints vs. The Warning of the Axe

The False Security System

Imagine a man walking a tightrope over a canyon. He is wearing a safety harness. The instructor tells him, "Don't worry. This harness is magic. No matter what you do—even if you try to jump, even if you cut the rope, even if you fall asleep—this harness will never let you fall." How will that man walk? Will he walk with caution? Will he keep his eyes fixed on the destination? Or will he become careless, perhaps even dancing on the wire, knowing he faces no consequences?

This is the danger of the Calvinist doctrine of the **Perseverance of the Saints**, often packaged as "Once Saved, Always Saved." The "P" in TULIP teaches that the Elect are eternally secure by a sovereign decree. It claims that a true believer can never fully or finally fall away from the state of grace. It argues that if a Christian turns into an atheist, becomes a serial killer, and dies in unrepentant sin, he was simply "never saved in the first place."

This creates a theological safety net that sounds comforting, but it contradicts the urgent, flashing red lights found throughout the New Testament. The Bible does not treat salvation as a static status that cannot be lost; it treats it as a relationship that must be maintained. The message of the prophets and apostles is not "Relax, you're safe." It is "**Take heed lest ye fall.**"

John the Baptist and the Axe

The first confrontation in the New Testament regarding "Eternal Security" happens in Matthew chapter 3. The Pharisees and Sadducees come to John the Baptist. These men believed in their own version of "Unconditional Election." They believed that because they were physical descendants of Abraham, they were guaranteed a spot in the Kingdom. They thought their heritage was their harness.

John shatters their confidence with a single metaphor: *"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."* (Matthew 3:10).

Look at the imagery.

1. **The Tree:** This represents the covenant person (The Jew, or by extension, the Christian).
2. **The Root:** The source of life.
3. **The Axe:** The judgment of God.
4. **The Condition:** "Bringeth not forth good fruit."
5. **The Consequence:** "Hewn down and cast into the fire."

John did not say, "If you don't bear fruit, it proves you were never a tree." He acknowledges they are trees! They are planted. They have a root. But he warns them: **Being a tree does not save you from the fire.** Bearing fruit saves you from the fire. If you stop bearing fruit, the Master of the Vineyard does not say, "Oh well, he's Elect." He swings the axe.

The Vine and the Branches: John 15

Calvinists often argue that the "trees" John spoke of were just false professors. But Jesus makes it impossible to use that excuse in John 15. *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away..."* (John 15:1-2).

Stop right there. Note the phrase: **"Every branch IN ME."** In Calvinist theology, to be "in Christ" is to be eternally secure. You cannot be "in Christ" and be lost. Yet Jesus describes a branch that is *in Him* but is fruitless. What happens to this branch? *"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."* (John 15:6).

The progression is terrifyingly clear:

1. **In Christ** (Saved/Connected).
2. **Not Abiding** (Stop believing/Stop obeying).
3. **Taken Away** (Removed from the Vine).
4. **Burned** (Final Judgment).

If "Perseverance of the Saints" were true, Jesus would have said: "Every branch in me will unfailingly bear fruit, and I will never take it away." But He didn't. He conditioned our security on our abiding. **"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love"** (John 15:10). The security is in the Vine. As long as you stay in the Vine, you are safe. But you have the free will to let go.

The Warning to the Gentiles: Romans 11

Perhaps the strongest argument against the Calvinist "Security of the Elect" is found in Paul's letter to the Romans—the very book Calvinists claim as their stronghold. In Chapter 11, Paul explains that the Jews (the natural branches) were broken off because of unbelief, and the Gentiles (the wild olive branches) were grafted in. Then he issues a stern warning to the Gentile believers—**to the Church:**

"Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, IF thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." (Romans 11:20-22).

This passage destroys the "Once Saved Always Saved" logic.

1. **The Threat is Real:** Paul tells saved Gentiles to "Fear." Why fear if you can't be lost?
2. **The Condition is Explicit:** "If thou continue." The word "If" is the enemy of Calvinism.
3. **The Penalty is Cutting Off:** "Otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

Paul is telling us: "Don't get arrogant. Don't think you are special. The Jews were the original Elect people, and God cut them off when they stopped believing. If you stop believing, He will cut you off too." You cannot reconcile "Thou shalt be cut off" with "Thou canst never be lost."

The "Never Knew You" Defense

When confronted with these verses, the Calvinist usually retreats to **Matthew 7:23**: *"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."*

They say, "See? Jesus said 'I NEVER knew you.' That means anyone who falls away was never really saved. If they had been saved, Jesus would have known them." **This is a half-truth.** Yes, there are false professors. Yes, there are people who say "Lord, Lord" but have no relationship with Him. These people were never saved.

But you cannot use Matthew 7 to erase John 15, Romans 11, and Hebrews 6. The Bible teaches **two categories** of people in hell:

1. **The Never Known:** Those who never had a relationship with Christ (Matthew 7).
2. **The Fallen Away:** Those who knew the way of righteousness and turned from it.

2 Peter 2:20-21 describes this second group: *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."*

Look at the details. They "escaped the pollutions of the world." They had "knowledge of the Lord." You cannot escape the world's pollution without the blood of Christ. These were people who were washed, but like the sow (pig) in the proverb, they returned to the mire. Peter does not say "They were never really washed." He says they returned to the mud *after* being washed.

The Blotting Out of Names (The Final Nail)

We return once more to the **Book of Life**. The doctrine of Perseverance relies on the idea that your name is permanently etched in stone. But as we saw in Revelation 3:5, Jesus says: *"He that overcometh... I will not blot out his name."* And in Exodus 32:33, God says: *"Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out."*

A name cannot be blotted out unless it was previously written in. This simple fact proves that a person can occupy a place of standing before God—a place of life and potential salvation—and lose it through rebellion. The Calvinist says, "If you leave the faith, you were never written in the book." The Bible says, "If you leave the faith, you get erased from the book." The difference is massive. One makes God a deceiver (pretending you were in); the other makes God a righteous Judge (removing you for cause).

Assurance vs. Presumption

Does this mean we should live in constant fear? No. The Bible teaches **Assurance of Salvation**, but it defines it differently than Calvinism.

- **Calvinist Assurance:** "I am safe because of a past decree made before I was born." (Logical deduction).
- **Biblical Assurance:** "I am safe because I am trusting in Jesus *right now*." (Relational confidence).

If you are abiding in Christ, believing His Gospel, and walking in the Spirit, you have absolute assurance. *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"* (Romans 8:16). You don't need to fear the axe while you are bearing fruit. The axe is for the dry, dead branches.

The problem with "Once Saved Always Saved" is that it gives assurance to the wrong person. It gives assurance to the backslider. It tells the man who is living in adultery, "Don't worry, you're just a 'carnal Christian,' you're still going to heaven." This is a lie. *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers... shall inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Paul warns them not to be deceived. Why? Because the doctrine of "unconditional security" is the ultimate deception for a sinner.

Conclusion: Stay on the Ship

Salvation is like being on Noah's Ark. Are you safe from the flood? Yes, absolutely. The Ark is waterproof. The Pitch is perfect. God shut the door. **But you must stay on the Ark.** If you decide to jump out of the window into the floodwaters, the Ark will not sink, but *you* will drown. Calvinism teaches you are chained to the Ark. The Bible teaches you are safe *in* the Ark, so **"Abide in Him."**

John the Baptist warned us. Jesus warned us. Paul warned us. Do not let a theological system silence the warnings of God. **The axe is laid at the root.** Bear fruit. Keep the faith. Finish the race. For *"he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Matthew 24:13).

In the final chapter, we will bring the entire book to a close. We will present the reader with a final choice: **The Doctor or The Baptist?** We will contrast the scholarly, philosophical god of Calvinism with the simple, urgent message of John the Baptist. It is time for the altar call.

The Choice: The Doctor or The Baptist?

The Tale of Two Preachers

We have come to the end of our journey. We have explored the dark caverns of Total Depravity, climbed the ivory towers of Unconditional Election, and stood before the warning signs of Limited Atonement. We have opened the Book of Life and watched the ink dry. We have seen the Axe laid at the root of the tree.

Now, as we close this book, I want you to imagine a scene. I want you to imagine two men standing before you. They are both preachers. They both claim to speak for God. But their messages are diametrically opposed. You cannot follow both. You must choose one.

On the left stands **The Doctor**. He is a man of impressive learning. He wears a tailored suit and holds a PhD from a prestigious seminary. He stands behind a polished wooden pulpit in a climate-controlled auditorium. Behind him are shelves lined with thousands of books—lexicons, commentaries, and the systematic theologies of men like Augustine and Calvin. He speaks with precision, using terms like "Exegesis," "Eisegesis," "Supralapsarianism," and "Monergism." He appeals to your intellect. He tells you that God is a Sovereign King who has scripted every molecule in the universe, and that if you are one of the Elect, you are safe forever, no matter what.

On the right stands **The Baptist**. He is a man of the wilderness. He wears a garment of camel's hair and a leather girdle. He stands in the muddy waters of the Jordan River, smelling of locusts and wild honey. He has no degrees. He has no library. He speaks with a raw, terrifying urgency that makes the religious leaders tremble. He appeals to your conscience. He tells you that the Kingdom is at hand, and that if you do not bring forth fruit worthy of repentance, you will burn.

The Doctor tells you: "You are safe because of a decree." The Baptist tells you: "You are in danger because of the Axe."

The entire debate of Calvinism comes down to this: **Who will you believe?**

The Resume of the Doctor

The Doctor—represented in our time by brilliant debaters like Dr. James White—offers a very attractive religion. It is a religion that appeals to the "Frozen Chosen." It satisfies the human desire for logical order. It tells you that salvation is a mathematical equation that was solved before the Big Bang.

When the Doctor opens his Bible to Romans 9, he reads it through the lens of his philosophy. He tells you: *"God has two lists. If you are on the Good List, you will be saved. God will drag you to Himself. He will grant you repentance. He will ensure you persevere. You don't need to worry about falling away, because the Elect cannot fall away. If someone falls away, they were simply an impostor."*

This message is seductive. It creates a sense of elite security. It allows you to look at the world and say, "I am special. I was picked." It removes the terrifying responsibility of free will. It tells you that your sin is just part of God's mysterious plan to glorify Himself. The Doctor will tell you that the warnings in the Bible are just "means" God uses to keep you in line, but that ultimately, the sheep cannot be lost. He offers you a safety harness made of steel chains.

But there is a problem. To believe the Doctor, you have to ignore the plain reading of the text. You have to redefine "World" to mean "Church." You have to redefine "All" to mean "Some." You have to explain away the verses about blotting out names and cutting off branches. You have to live in a world of theological footnotes.

The Resume of the Baptist

Now, let us look at John the Baptist. Why does he matter? Because Jesus Christ gave him the highest endorsement in human history. Jesus said: *"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist"* (Matthew 11:11).

If Jesus says John is the greatest, we had better listen to John's theology. And what was John's theology regarding the "Elect"? The Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism. These were the "Elect" of the Old Testament. They were the children of Abraham. They had the Covenant. They had the promises. By every Calvinistic definition, they were the "Chosen People."

Did John say to them: "Welcome, brothers! You are eternally secure because of God's sovereign choice of Abraham"? No. He looked them in the eye and screamed: *"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"* (Matthew 3:7).

He stripped away their security blanket. *"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."* He told them: **Your Election does not save you.** God can replace you with rocks if He has to.

And then, he dropped the hammer: *"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."*

The Baptist teaches that an "Elect" tree (a Jew/a Covenant member) can be cut down and burned if it fails to produce fruit. This directly contradicts the Doctor. The Doctor says the Elect cannot be cut off. The Baptist says the Elect are the *first* ones to face the axe.

The Complexity Trap vs. The Simplicity of Christ

One of the hallmarks of a false system is that it requires a PhD to understand it. If you sit down with a Jehovah's Witness, they will take you through a labyrinth of verses to prove Jesus isn't God. If you sit down with a Calvinist, they will take you through a labyrinth of Greek grammar and "historical context" to prove "All Men" doesn't mean "All Men."

But the Gospel was not written for scholars. It was written for fishermen, tax collectors, and children. *"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes"* (Matthew 11:25).

Who are the "wise and prudent"? They are the Doctors. They are the systematic theologians who have constructed a god in their own intellectual image. Who are the "babes"? They are the simple believers who read John 3:16 and believe it means exactly what it says.

The Baptist's message is simple:

1. **Repent.** (Turn from your sin).
2. **Believe.** (Trust the Messiah).
3. **Bear Fruit.** (Prove your repentance by your life).
4. **Get Baptized.** (Wash away your sins).

You don't need a lexicon to understand that. You need a conscience. Calvinism thrives in the classroom. The Gospel thrives in the street. Calvinism thrives on debate. The Gospel thrives on desperation. When a man is drowning, he doesn't need a lecture on the hydrodynamics of buoyancy. He needs a rope. The Doctor offers a lecture on why God ordained the drowning. The Baptist throws the rope.

The Final Exam

I want you to fast-forward to the end of your life. You are standing before the Great White Throne Judgment. The books are opened. The eyes of Jesus Christ—eyes like a flame of fire—are fixed upon you.

Do you really think you will be able to say: "Lord, I didn't repent because You didn't give me the Irresistible Grace to do it"? Do you think you can say: "Lord, I didn't believe because I wasn't on the list"? Do you think you can say: "Lord, I lived in sin because I was 'Eternal Security' and I thought my fruit didn't matter"?

That excuse will burn up in the presence of His Holiness. God will open the Book. He will point to the moments in your life where the Holy Spirit tugged on your heart—and you said "No." He will point to the sermons you heard—and you ignored. He will point to the Bible on your shelf—that you didn't read. He will say: *"I called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded"* (Proverbs 1:24).

The Calvinist system tells you that God is responsible for your salvation and your damnation. The Bible tells you that **God is innocent of your blood**. If you go to hell, you will go there over the crushed body of Jesus Christ, past the warnings of the Holy Spirit, and through a door that you locked from the inside.

The Invitation

We have weighed TULIP and found it wanting.

- **Total Depravity?** No, you are a sinner who can cry for help.
- **Unconditional Election?** No, you are chosen *in Christ* when you believe.
- **Limited Atonement?** No, the blood was shed for the whole world.
- **Irresistible Grace?** No, you can resist the Spirit, so stop resisting!
- **Perseverance of the Saints?** No, the axe is laid at the root.

So, what now? The choice is yours. You can go back to the Doctor. You can listen to the podcasts, read the heavy books, and convince yourself that you are part of the secret elite. You can look down on the "Arminians" and the simple Christians who "don't understand the deep things." You can wrap yourself in the cold comfort of fatalism.

Or, you can go to the Baptist. You can go down to the river. You can admit that you are a sinner in danger of the fire. You can admit that your philosophy cannot save you. And you can look to the One the Baptist pointed to.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29).

Not the sin of the Elect. **The sin of the World.** That includes you. The Lamb has died. The price is paid. The door is open. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. **And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.**

Do not let a theologian stand in the doorway. Push past the Doctor. Run to the Savior. And live.

The Trap of Genius: Why We Must Sweep the Table Clean

The Liability of Intelligence

As we close this book, we must give credit where credit is due. If we were judging men by pure raw intelligence, rhetorical skill, and philosophical brilliance, **Augustine of Hippo** would stand as the greatest Church Father in history. If we were judging men by their ability to organize thought, construct arguments, and systematize theology, **John Calvin** would stand as the greatest Reformer in history.

These men were not stupid. They were giants. They possessed IQs that dwarf the average man. They could debate circles around their opponents. They were master architects of logic. **And that was their fatal flaw.**

The Bible warns us: *"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called"* (1 Corinthians 1:26). Why? Because God *"hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."*

The intelligence of Augustine and Calvin was not an asset; **it was a liability**. Because they were so brilliant, they could not be satisfied with the simple statements of Scripture. They had to organize them. They had to reconcile them with their background in philosophy. They had to build a "System." And in their arrogance, they built a system so complex, so rigid, and so "logical" that it marched them straight away from the God of the Bible and into the arms of a dark, philosophical monster.

Their genius led them to the most twisted understanding of God imaginable. By following their logic to its cold end, they turned the God of Love into a deity who scripts rape, ordains murder, and creates babies for the purpose of burning them. **In their attempt to defend God's sovereignty, they turned God into the devil himself.**

The Clash of Titans: Luther vs. Erasmus

We see this same tragedy in the great debates of the Reformation. Consider the legendary battle between **Martin Luther** and **Desiderius Erasmus**. Luther was a firebrand. He saw the corruption of Rome. He rediscovered the glorious truth of **Justification by Faith**. He was absolutely correct that our righteousness is filthy rags, and that we need the imputed righteousness of Christ. But Luther was also an Augustinian monk. He was thoroughly indoctrinated in the fatalism of Augustine. He never abandoned the error that man's will is utterly bound by necessity.

Erasmus, on the other hand, saw the absurdity of Luther's determinism. He argued for the responsibility of man. So, who was right? **Neither.**

- **Luther** was right about Faith but wrong about the Will. He kept the Augustinian poison in the well.

- **Erasmus** was right about the Will but often leaned too heavily on humanism and missed the power of the Gospel.

For centuries, men have felt forced to choose. "Are you a Lutheran or a Humanist?" **Sweep them both aside.** Both men contained good things, but both men were polluted by the systems of their day. Luther freed us from the Pope, but he shackled us to Augustine. We do not need to follow either man. We have the Book they were arguing about.

The False Binary: Calvinism vs. Arminianism

This leads us to the debate that has paralyzed the church for 400 years: **Calvinism vs. Arminianism.** Young theological students are told they must pick a side.

- **Team Calvin:** God does everything; man does nothing (Determinism).
- **Team Arminius:** Man chooses God, but can lose salvation if he fails to maintain it (Insecurity).

For centuries, brilliant men have been caught in this trap, debating two sides of a false coin. The Calvinist protects the **Sovereignty of God** but destroys His Goodness. The Arminian protects the **Free Will of Man** but often undermines the Security of the Believer.

Both are wrong. Neither is completely right. The debate has been a colossal waste of time. Millions of hours have been spent arguing over "TULIP" vs. "The Remonstrance," while the simple truth of the Bible lay ignored in the corner.

We do not need to balance these views. **We need to sweep the table clean.** We need to realize that these "Systems" are the traditions of men. *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ"* (Colossians 2:8).

The Danger of the "System"

The moment you start trying to make the Bible fit into a "System"—whether it is Calvinism, Arminianism, Lutheranism, or Catholicism—you have to start cutting off pieces of the puzzle.

- The Calvinist cuts off the "Whosoever Will" verses.
- The Arminian cuts off the "Eternal Security" verses.
- The Lutheran cuts off the "Free Will" verses.

The Bible is not a System. It is a Revelation. It reveals a God who is big enough to be Sovereign *and* allow Free Will. It reveals a God who is holy enough to demand righteousness *and* loving enough to provide it. It reveals a Book of Life that was written before the foundation of the world *and* warns that names can be blotted out.

The geniuses—Augustine, Calvin, Luther—could not handle the tension. Their minds demanded a neat, tidy box. So they built the box, and they shoved God into it.

Conclusion: Enough Thinking

We have done enough thinking. We have done enough debating. We have done enough consulting with the "Church Fathers." The Church Fathers were men. They were sinners. They were often influenced by pagan philosophy (Neoplatonism, Manichaeism, Humanism).

It is time to stop asking, "What did Calvin say?" It is time to stop asking, "What did the Synod of Dort say?" It is time to ask: **"What saith the Scripture?"** (Romans 4:3).

If you want the truth, you must be willing to look foolish to the academics. You must be willing to be called "unsophisticated" by the Doctor of Divinity. You must be willing to open your King James Bible, read the words as they are written, and believe them—even if they contradict the genius of Augustine.

The brilliance of man led us into the dark. The simplicity of the Word will lead us back to the Light.

Part IV: The Topical Bible Studies (KJV)

Calvinism: Fine Tuning or Monkey Wrench Tweaking?



When listening to the highly trained speakers of the Reformed tradition, the teachings they call TULIP can sound overwhelmingly deep. It sounds so layered that the working man either tries to commit every answer given by the Reformed apologist to memory, or he simply shuts off his thinking mind and blindly trusts the speaker. He assumes that because the man holds high academic standing and handily dismantles nearly everyone he debates, he must be speaking the truth. This is exactly why this writer—a man with only a sixth-grade formal schooling—must lay out what is truly happening in straightforward language. We must peel back the heavy weight of the five-hundred-book libraries, the deep scholarship of the learned men, and the fifteen-hundred-year history that has split the Christian faith since the fifth century. We must strip it bare for you to weigh and measure, using words so clearly that anyone can easily understand the stakes.

Each one of us sits as a judge, weighing the findings. I am not resting on the fence; rather, I am thoroughly won over by the overwhelming witness of the Scriptures. I believe the entire framework of Calvinism was built within the brilliant minds of men, yet it remains altogether foreign to the text of the King James Bible. Its findings are not a fine-tuning of the Word of God. Instead, they are the handiwork of backyard mechanics—a monkey-wrench tweaking of the Bible done by those who failed to rightly divide the word of truth, just as the apostle gave warning.

With the rise of artificial intelligence, you do not need to simply take my word for it. You do not even need this book, nor do you need to lean on the topical Bible studies as they are laid out in this section. What I am putting forth is no magic trick; it is no sleight of hand. Instead, I am showing that the teachers within the Reformed movement are the ones who have carried you away with

every wind of teaching, tricking the simple-minded by their sleight of hand. It would be wholly unfair to make these bold claims without giving you, the reader, a clear pathway to prove or disprove them. Therefore, that is exactly what we will set up before looking at the verses.

First, you must draft your own clear understanding of TULIP. Make it sharp and well-mapped. Here is the reason you must do this first: Calvinists themselves are not unbroken in their shared understanding of these five points. In the past, whenever a writer wrote a book to dismantle the framework, a smaller subgroup of Calvinists would always cry that he was fighting a straw man. Even though many real Calvinists held the exact beliefs written in that book, the smaller, splintered groups were right to point out that the book did not match their own specific teachings. To stop this from happening, I want you to define Calvinism for yourself. Make sure you have a well-written draft that matches exactly what you believe. This first step is an absolute must, and your wording must be deep and highly detailed, not broad or vague.

Here is why that first step is the absolute bedrock. It gives you the power to test my claims on your own using whichever AI you choose whether ChatGPT, Gemini, Grok, or Claude. The second step is to feed the AI your own private definitions of TULIP—the very beliefs you have used to read the Bible for decades. Then, ask the AI to weigh the full list of 1945 verses against what you wrote. But the AI must follow strict guidelines. **First**, it is forbidden from using any outside voices; what Augustine, Calvin, or Luther wrote simply does not matter. The only thing that bears weight is the raw text of the King James Bible. This brings us to **the second rule: the** AI must only use the King James Bible and only care about what the raw text actually says. **The third rule** is that the AI must either make the whole Bible fit seamlessly with your beliefs, or it must prove those beliefs wrong. It must start with the simple verses that are clear and written in straightforward speech. It must use those easy verses as cold facts to see how the Bible shapes its own words. Under this third rule, the AI must never start with the hard or deep passages. It must save them for the very end. It must use the ninety-five percent of verses that are unmistakably clear as the bedrock, and then use that bedrock to make sense of the final few hard verses, bringing them into full harmony with the rest of the Bible.

Does the way Calvinists read and shape these 106 verses truly fit together with the rest of the Bible? Or does their framing monkey-wrench the greater part of Scripture, forcing the Word to match their own foregone, worldly wisdom? When the most deeply learned men of the Reformed faith explain these 106 verses, their framework looks like a seamless whole. It seems to be an unbreakable thread that ties everything perfectly together.



Yet, a striking shift happens when we weigh their private views and the specific ways they map out TULIP for themselves. When we take the beliefs of their splintered camps and lay them against the full weight of 1945 verses, the system shatters. When we look at all the broad themes that must be weighed—rather than just the five hand-picked topics they ask us to look at—making their thoughts fit the whole Bible simply cannot be done. It leaves no shadow of a doubt: these worldly thinkers are teaching the traditions of Augustine and Calvin. They are making void the whole counsel of God, lifting their earthly scholars and theologians high above the Bible itself.

TULIP: Weighed and Found Wanting

Calvinism: An Analysis of Selective Proof-Texting (The Cherry-Picking Fallacy)



The theological framework of Calvinism rests primarily on a specific set of 106 foundational verses. While this list is extensive, critics argue that the system relies on a curated selection of Scripture that excludes broader biblical themes of human responsibility and universal grace. The following verses constitute the primary evidence used to support the Reformed position:

Genesis 6:5, Genesis 8:21, Deuteronomy 7:6-8, Psalm 14:1-3, Jeremiah 17:9, Malachi 3:6, Matthew 1:21, John 6:37, John 6:39, John 6:44-45, John 6:65, John 10:11, John 10:14-15, John 10:27-29, John 16:33, John 17:9, Acts 13:48, Acts 16:14, Acts 20:28, Romans 3:10-18, Romans 3:24, Romans 5:12, Romans 8:28-30, Romans 8:32-39, Romans 9:10-29, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 1 Corinthians 4:7, Ephesians 1:4-6, Ephesians 1:10-23, Ephesians 2:1-3, Ephesians 5:25, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, 2 Timothy 1:9, 2 Timothy 1:12, 2 Timothy 2:25, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 John 2:19.

The Five Pillars of TULIP: Primary Proof Texts

The following verses serve as the scriptural foundation for the five points of Calvinism. These are the specific passages most frequently cited to support the Reformed theological framework.

- **T — Total Depravity:** Genesis 6:5, Genesis 8:21, Psalm 14:1-3, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10-18, Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:1-3.
- **U — Unconditional Election:** Deuteronomy 7:6-8, Malachi 3:6, John 6:37, John 6:44, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:28-30, Romans 9:10-29, 1 Corinthians 4:7, Ephesians 1:4-6, 2 Timothy 1:9.
- **L — Limited Atonement:** Matthew 1:21, John 10:11, John 10:14-15, John 17:9, Acts 20:28, Romans 3:24, Romans 8:32-34, Ephesians 5:25.
- **I — Irresistible Grace:** John 6:45, John 6:65, Acts 16:14, Romans 8:30, Romans 9:16, Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 2 Timothy 2:25.
- **P — Perseverance of the Saints:** John 6:39, John 10:27-29, John 16:33, Romans 8:35-39, Philippians 1:6, 2 Timothy 1:12, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 John 2:19.

The Scale of Truth: Weighing the System

We must not judge the validity of a doctrine by a curated handful of verses; truth must be weighed against the **whole counsel of God**. When the TULIP system is placed upon the scales of the King James Bible, it is found wanting. No system of man can withstand the full weight of the Scriptures.

Do not take our word for it, and do not trust in the airtight logic of human philosophy. We invite you to conduct your own study. Put away the commentaries, stop leaning on your own understanding, and let the Bible speak for itself. Compare the 106 verses above with the thousands that remain, and ask: does the system reflect the heart of God, or the mind of a man?

God's Plan of Salvation

A Comprehensive Topical Bible Study Dismantling Calvinism



Article One: The Gospel

We often view the Gospel as a mere historical event, a religious story meant to inspire moral living or offer vague comfort to the grieving. Yet Scripture reveals it as a cosmic, blood-bought rescue mission—a violent and beautiful collision where God's perfect justice meets His unsearchable grace. The world sees the cross as the tragic end of a good teacher, but the Bible declares it to be the deliberate, prophesied masterstroke of the Almighty to redeem a fallen creation.

Part 1: The Divine Desire for Salvation

Before time began, the heart of God yearned to restore communion with mankind. This section establishes the foundation of the Gospel: God takes no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked, but actively seeks our redemption through His Son.

God's Great Love

John 3:16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

The Mission of Christ

Luke 19:10. For the Son of man is come to *seek and to save that which was lost.*

God's Will for All

1 Timothy 2:3-4. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; ***Who will have all men to be saved***, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

The Patience of God

2 Peter 3:9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, ***not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.***

No Pleasure in Death

Ezekiel 18:23, 32. [Context of God's Righteous Judgment] Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?... ***For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth***, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

Part 2: The Prophetic Promise

The Gospel is not an afterthought or a reaction to a sudden crisis; it was meticulously woven into the fabric of history. From the curse in Eden to the ancient prophets, God promised a Seed who would ultimately conquer sin, death, and the adversary.

Promised in the Scriptures

Romans 1:1-6. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, ***(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)*** Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power... By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:

The First Gospel Promise

Genesis 3:15. [Context of the Fall of Man] And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; ***it shall bruise thy head***, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

The Pierced Substitute

Isaiah 53:5-6. But ***he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities***: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The Reigning Son

Psalm 2:1-12. [Context of the Rebellious Nations] ...I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee... ***Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way,*** when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Part 3: The Incarnation and Sacrifice

The invisible God took on flesh, entering the broken world He created to become the perfect sacrifice. Here we move from the ancient promise of the Gospel to its historical, physical execution upon the cross.

The Core of the Gospel

1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel... For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, ***how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day*** according to the scriptures:

Love Demonstrated

Romans 5:8. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, ***while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.***

The Adoption of Sons

Galatians 4:4-7. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ***To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*** And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

The Express Image

Hebrews 1:1-3. God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, ***when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;***

The Word Made Flesh

John 1:1-18. [Context of Christ's Eternal Deity] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... ***And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,*** (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth... For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Part 4: The Ministry of Reconciliation

The finished work of the cross demands an application that transforms the sinner into a new creation. Through faith, we are grafted into this living hope, given access to the throne of God, and commissioned to carry this truth to the nations.

Saved by Grace

Ephesians 2:8-9. *For by grace are ye saved through faith*; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

The New Creation

2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new... To wit, that ***God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself***, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation... For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Reconciled by His Death

Colossians 1:21-23. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, ***yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death***, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel...

Our High Priest

Hebrews 4:14-16. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. ***Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace***, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The Continual Intercessor

Romans 8:34. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, ***who also maketh intercession for us***.

The Commission

Luke 24:45-49. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: ***And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations***, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Part 5: Harmonization & Conclusion

The Gospel message is vast, moving from the simplicity of God's love to the severe reality of His holy justice. We must understand how these threads weave together into a single tapestry of truth.

The Harmony of the Foundation

The foundational verses of our study present a remarkably clear and unified picture: God operates out of a profound, self-sacrificial love for a fallen humanity. We see that the Creator actively desires reconciliation, going so far as to clothe Himself in human flesh, bear the crushing weight of our iniquities on the cross, and defeat the grave. The simple truth is that salvation is a free gift, entirely unearned, provided by the substitutionary death of Christ. Those who come to Him in faith are completely forgiven, adopted as sons, and transformed into new creatures by His grace.

Addressing the Complex Verses

- **Ezekiel 18:23, 32.** Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?... For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.
- **Psalms 2:12.** Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

The Final Harmonization

A tension often arises when attempting to reconcile the loving God of the Gospel with the God who possesses a terrible, consuming wrath against sin. How can a God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked still allow men to perish under His anger? The Gospel itself is the harmonization of this paradox. God's wrath in Psalm 2 and His merciful pleading in Ezekiel 18 are not contradictory; they are two sides of His perfect holiness. God must punish sin because He is just, yet He takes no joy in condemning the sinner because He is love. The cross of Jesus Christ is the sole focal point where both realities meet perfectly. Christ absorbed the fierce anger of Psalm 2 so that the loving desire of Ezekiel 18 could be freely offered. The Gospel warns us that while the wrath of God is terrifyingly real, the grace of God has made an absolute way of escape for any who will simply trust the Son.

Article Two: The Sinfulness of Man

We naturally prefer to view human nature as essentially good, believing that mankind is simply misunderstood, a product of environment, or capable of self-improvement through moral effort. Yet, Scripture strips away this comforting illusion, revealing a radically different reality. The Bible exposes the human heart as inherently deceitful, radically corrupted by the fall, and spiritually dead, unable to cure its own disease. Rather than a minor flaw to be managed, sin is presented as a terminal condition inherited by all, demanding a profound and divine intervention.

Part 1: The Origin and Inheritance of Sin

This section establishes the historical entrance of sin into the human bloodline and its universal transmission. The verses progress from the plain statement of inheritance to the complex consequences established in Eden.

The Universal Infection

Romans 5:12. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, *for that all have sinned*:

The Shared Condition

1 Corinthians 15:22. For as *in Adam all die*, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

The Inherent Nature

Psalms 51:5. [The Psalmist's confession] Behold, *I was shapen in iniquity*; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

The Edenic Fall

Genesis 3:15-24. [Context of the Curse] ...Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception... And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: *cursed is the ground for thy sake*... So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Part 2: The Depravity of the Human Heart

Here, we examine the internal condition of mankind. Scripture moves from acknowledging our universal wandering to exposing the desperate wickedness residing deep within the human heart.

The Universal Wandering

Isaiah 53:6. *All we like sheep have gone astray*; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The Deceitful Core

Jeremiah 17:9. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*: who can know it?

The Total Indictment

Romans 3:9-18. ...As it is written, *There is none righteous, no, not one*: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one...

The Early Imagination

Genesis 6:5. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*.

Part 3: The Fruits of Sin and Human Wisdom

Sin is not merely an internal state; it manifests outwardly in rebellion, misplaced trust, and moral decay. This section traces how human wisdom is foolishness to God, leading to utter depravity when mankind is given over to a reprobate mind.

The Curse of Fleshly Trust

Jeremiah 17:5. Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and *maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord*.

The Unrighteous Excluded

1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Know ye not that *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God*? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

The Foolishness of Man

1 Corinthians 1:18-25. [Context of the Cross] For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise... *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men*; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

The Downward Spiral

Romans 1:18-32. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men... Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and *their foolish heart was darkened*... And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient...

Part 4: Individual Accountability and Innocence

This section addresses the nuanced reality of personal guilt versus the innocence of childhood. While humanity inherits a fallen nature, God judges individuals based on their own iniquity and their capacity to choose between good and evil.

The Soul's Reawakening to Law

Romans 7:9. For I was alive without the law once: but *when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

The End of Generational Blame

Jeremiah 31:29-30. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But *every one shall die for his own iniquity*: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

The Age of Discernment

Isaiah 7:15-16. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may *know to refuse the evil, and choose the good*. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

The Innocent Ones

Deuteronomy 1:39. Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and *your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil*, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.

The Strict Accounting

Ezekiel 18:19-20. ...The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: *the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*

Part 5: The Final Judgment of Sin

Ultimately, unredeemed sin demands divine justice. This section reveals the terrifying climax of human rebellion: the unavoidable appointment with death, the judgment seat, and the finality of the second death.

The Wages Earned

Romans 6:23. For *the wages of sin is death*; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Appointed End

Hebrews 9:27-28. And as *it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many...

The Judgment Seat

2 Corinthians 5:10. For *we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The Terrifying Rejection

Matthew 7:21-23. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven... Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? ...And then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*.

The Great White Throne

Revelation 20:11-15. ...And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened... and *the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works*. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them... And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Part 6: Harmonization & Conclusion

The Harmony of the Foundation

The clearest verses of Scripture unify around a devastating truth: humanity is entirely infected by the disease of sin. From Romans 5 outlining the inheritance of death through Adam, to the stark declarations of Jeremiah and Isaiah exposing the deceitful and wayward nature of the human heart, the milk of the word establishes that no human being is naturally righteous. This inherent depravity produces outward rebellion and spiritual blindness, ensuring that without divine intervention, mankind is wholly incapable of pleasing God or saving himself.

Addressing the Complex Verses

- **Ezekiel 18:20.** ...The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

- **Deuteronomy 1:39.** Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither...

The Final Harmonization

A superficial reading might suggest a contradiction between the doctrine of inherited depravity (Romans 5:12) and the doctrine of individual accountability and childhood innocence (Ezekiel 18:20, Deuteronomy 1:39). However, these truths harmoniously deepen one another. While all human beings inherit a fallen nature and the inevitability of physical death from Adam, God's perfect justice dictates that spiritual damnation is meted out for *individual* transgressions of known law. Young children, possessing no knowledge between good and evil, are shielded by God's grace until the law revives within their conscience (Romans 7:9). The tension is resolved in the righteousness of God: He accurately diagnoses our inherited disease, yet He judges us fairly based on our own willful acts, leaving every accountable adult without excuse while preserving the innocent.

Article Three: The Atonement of Christ

We naturally view our spiritual debts as a ledger we must slowly clear through human effort, lifetimes of good deeds, and religious striving. Yet, Scripture reveals the staggering reality that the debt was paid in full, in a single brutal moment, by an innocent substitute. The Atonement is not a bridge built halfway by God and halfway by man; it is a completed, unrepeatable work of grace where the Creator takes the punishment of the creature. Through the dark reality of the cross, the impossible standard of the Law is fully satisfied, legally perfecting the believer forever and shattering the chains of condemnation.

Part 1: The Singular Way of Forgiveness

The foundation of the Atonement begins with the simplest and most absolute truths of the Gospel. Mankind is separated from God, and there is only one acceptable remedy for sin: the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

The Only Path

John 14:6. Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: ***no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.***

The Cleansing Blood

1 John 1:7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and ***the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.***

The Universal Provision

1 John 2:2. And he is the propitiation for our sins: ***and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.***

The Simple Command

Acts 16:30-31. [The Philippian Jailer's plea] And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, ***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,*** and thy house.

Part 2: The Prophetic Agony

Centuries before the Roman Empire existed, the Spirit of God laid out the exact details of the Messiah's suffering. The cross was not an accident of history, but a deliberate, foreordained event designed to bear the iniquity of us all.

Crushed for Our Iniquities

Isaiah 53:4-6. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and ***the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

The Pierced Hands

Psalms 22:16-18. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: ***they pierced my hands and my feet.*** I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

The Apostolic Witness

Acts 10:39-43. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly... To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name ***whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.***

Part 3: The Mechanics of Imputation

Here we transition to the "meat" of the doctrine. How does the death of Christ legally save a sinner? It is through the doctrine of imputation—our sins were legally credited to Christ, and His perfect, unblemished righteousness is legally credited to us.

The Great Exchange

2 Corinthians 5:21. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; ***that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.***

The Curse Absorbed

Galatians 3:10-14. [Context of the Law's condemnation] ***Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:*** for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The Justifier of the Unjust

Romans 3:23-26. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God... ***that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.***

Reconciled by the Cross

Colossians 1:19-20. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, *having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself*; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Part 4: The Final High Priest

We now enter the "strong meat" found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Old Testament sacrifices were merely shadows, requiring endless repetition. Christ, serving as both the ultimate High Priest and the spotless Lamb, offered Himself once, securing eternal redemption and abolishing the old system forever.

The Sole Mediator

1 Timothy 2:5-6. For there is one God, and *one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

The Eternal Blood

Hebrews 9:11-12. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but *by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

The Final Appearance

Hebrews 9:24-28. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others... but now *once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

Perfected For Ever

Hebrews 10:11-14. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God... *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

Part 5: Harmonization & Conclusion

This final section pulls the threads together, proving that the simple promises of grace perfectly align with the complex legal and priestly realities of the Atonement.

The Harmony of the Foundation

The foundational verses clearly establish that salvation is found in one person alone—Jesus Christ—and that His shed blood provides a universal cleansing for anyone who simply believes. The prophetic verses add the weight of divine foreknowledge, proving that the Messiah was intentionally crushed to carry our specific iniquities. This is the bedrock of the Gospel: God loves the world, man is deeply fallen, and the cross is the solitary mechanism for our rescue and remission of sins.

Addressing the Complex Verses

- **Galatians 3:13.** Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:
- **Hebrews 10:14.** For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

The Final Harmonization

At first glance, the heavy legal language of becoming a "curse" or being "perfected for ever" might seem intimidating, challenging our daily reality where we still struggle with sin. However, these complex verses do not contradict the simple promise of grace; they secure it. If Christ had merely offered to help us pay our debt, we would remain under the curse of the Law. By legally becoming the curse in our place (Imputation), He exhausted the wrath of God entirely. Therefore, the believer is not "perfected for ever" by their own daily performance, but rather, they stand blameless before the Father solely because the High Priest's "one offering" permanently covers them. The simple faith of the child and the complex legal transaction of the Atonement harmonize perfectly: we rest secure because the work is truly, and forever, finished.

Article Four: The Grace of God

We naturally view the world through the lens of human merit, believing that every reward must be earned and every debt paid by the sweat of our own brow. Yet, the biblical reality of grace shatters this human logic. Grace is not a wage paid to the worthy, nor is it a supplement to our own good works; it is the absolute, unmerited favor of God poured out upon the helpless. It is the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ fulfilling an impossible standard, offering life to those who deserve only condemnation.

Part 1: The Foundation of Grace (Unmerited Favor)

The scriptures explicitly declare that salvation is wholly of God, a gift unmerited by our efforts but driven entirely by His profound love. We do not initiate this spiritual rescue; God reaches down into our absolute depravity to draw us to Himself.

He First Loved Us

1 John 4:19. We love him, *because he first loved us.*

Christ Died for the Ungodly

Romans 5:6. For when we were yet without strength, *in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

Love Demonstrated Toward Sinners

Romans 5:8. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Grace to the Lowly

Proverbs 3:34. Surely he scorneth the scorners: *but he giveth grace unto the lowly.*

The Gift of God

Ephesians 2:8-10. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God:* Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Grace Brings Salvation

Titus 2:11. For *the grace of God that bringeth salvation* hath appeared to all men,

Part 2: The Mechanism of Grace (Imputed Righteousness)

God declares a sinner righteous not based on any inherent goodness within the person, but solely by legally crediting the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ to their account. Any attempt to mix

human works with God's grace fundamentally alters the gospel and nullifies the finished work of the Cross.

Justified Freely

Romans 3:24. *Being justified freely by his grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

The Law of Faith

Romans 3:27-28. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that ***a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.***

Saved Through the Lord's Grace

Acts 15:11. But we believe that ***through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved,*** even as they.

Grace is No More Works

Romans 11:6. And ***if by grace, then is it no more of works:*** otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

The Abounding Gift

Romans 5:15-21. [Context of the fall vs. the gift] ...much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, ***hath abounded unto many.*** ...That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Part 3: The Triumphant Work of Grace

Grace does far more than simply pardon; it provides permanent access to the throne of God and removes the heavy, damning burden of the old law. It is the finished atonement by which we are reconciled, forgiven, justified, and perfected forever.

A Remnant by Grace

Ezra 9:8. And now for a little space ***grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God,*** to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

The Throne of Grace

Hebrews 4:16. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, ***that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.***

Testifying of Grace

Acts 20:24. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, *to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

Sufficient Grace

2 Corinthians 12:9. And he said unto me, ***My grace is sufficient for thee:*** for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Handwriting of Ordinances Blotted Out

Colossians 2:13-17. ...having forgiven you all trespasses; ***Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,*** which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross... Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

Righteousness by Faith

Philippians 3:2-9. [Context of forsaking fleshly confidence] ...And be found in him, ***not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,*** but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Part 4: The Danger of Rejecting Grace

While God's grace is freely and powerfully offered, the Scriptures carry solemn warnings for those who trust in their own self-righteousness or actively reject the drawing power of the truth. Rejection of this gift is not due to a built-in inability to believe, but a tragic moral choice where men love darkness and cling to their own evil deeds.

The Kingdom Came Nigh

Luke 10:1-12. [Context of rejecting the Gospel messengers] But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not... ***Notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.***

The Tragedy of Rejection

Matthew 23:37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, ***and ye would not!***

With God All Things are Possible

Matthew 19:16-30. [Context of trusting in riches over Christ] ...Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; ***but with God all things are possible.***

Removed to Another Gospel

Galatians 1:6. I marvel that ye are *so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ* unto another gospel:

Frustrating the Grace of God

Galatians 2:21. *I do not frustrate the grace of God:* for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Fallen from Grace

Galatians 5:4. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; *ye are fallen from grace.*

The Spirit of Grace Poured Out

Zechariah 12:10. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *the spirit of grace and of supplications:* and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son...

Final Salvation for Those Looking

Hebrews 9:28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him *shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

Part 5: Harmonization & Conclusion

The Harmony of the Foundation

The foundational verses uniformly declare that salvation is an unmerited gift, secured entirely by the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We are justified by faith alone, completely apart from any human effort, because our own righteousness is utterly insufficient to meet God's standard. Grace operates by legally imputing Christ's perfect record to the believer, permanently removing them from condemnation and supplying the spiritual strength required for the daily walk.

Addressing the Complex Verses

Galatians 5:4. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Matthew 23:37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

The Final Harmonization

At first glance, a phrase like "fallen from grace" or Christ lamenting "ye would not" might seem to contradict the sovereign power and eternal security of God's unmerited favor. However, true harmony reveals that these are not contradictions, but stark warnings against returning to a system of human works. To "fall from grace" in Galatians is not to lose one's salvation through a random moral failure, but to abandon the very mechanism of grace by attempting to earn justification through the law, which is an impossible standard. Similarly, Christ's lament over Jerusalem demonstrates that the life-giving power of God's grace actively draws men, but individuals can tragically resist that drawing power by clinging to their own self-righteous pride. The tension is resolved when we understand that grace is absolute, free, and completely sufficient—yet it demands the empty hands of faith rather than the busy hands of legalism.

Article Five: The Regeneration of the Sinner

We often view self-improvement as the path to God, believing that if we simply clean up our habits and try harder, we will become acceptable in His sight. We treat our spiritual condition as a minor illness requiring only a little moral medicine. Yet, Scripture reveals a much darker, more profound reality: we are not merely sick; we are spiritually dead. Regeneration is not a self-help project or a fresh start; it is a violent, miraculous resurrection from the grave of sin, orchestrated entirely by the Spirit of God.

Part 1: The Necessity of New Life

Before a man can walk in righteousness, he must first be brought back to life. The scriptures make it abundantly clear that human effort cannot bridge this gap; a complete, supernatural rebirth is the only entry point into the Kingdom of God.

The Only Way to See God

John 3:3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, *Except a man be born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Dead, but Now Alive

Luke 15:24. [Context of the Prodigal Son] For this my son *was dead, and is alive again*; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

The Promise of a New Heart

Ezekiel 36:26. A new heart also will I give you, and *a new spirit will I put within you*: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

The Necessity of Hearing

Romans 10:14. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and *how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?* and how shall they hear without a preacher?

Part 2: The Agent of Regeneration

This new birth is not brought about by human will, but by the direct, active working of the Holy Ghost. Being born of water and the Spirit is an essential requirement, where physical water baptism is the moment one receives the Holy Spirit. It involves a cleansing washing and an inward sealing that permanently alters the believer's nature.

The Washing of Regeneration

Titus 3:5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the *washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*;

Repentance and the Spirit

Acts 2:37-39. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and ***be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins***, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Rivers of Living Water

John 7:37-39. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But ***this spake he of the Spirit***, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The Comforter's Conviction

John 16:7-14. [Context of Christ's departure] Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, ***he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment...***

Part 3: The Transformation of the Believer

When the Spirit regenerates a sinner, the old identity is entirely eradicated in the eyes of God. The believer becomes the Temple of the living God, and the Father views this indwelling presence as the perfect, unblemished righteousness of Christ. What emerges is a completely new creation, quickened from the dead.

The Abundant Life

John 10:10. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: ***I am come that they might have life***, and that they might have it more abundantly.

A Completely New Creature

2 Corinthians 5:17. Therefore if any man be in Christ, ***he is a new creature***: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

The Irrelevance of the Flesh

Galatians 6:15. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but ***a new creature***.

Quickened Together with Him

Colossians 2:13. And you, *being dead in your sins* and the uncircumcision of your flesh, *hath he quickened together with him*, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Raised from Spiritual Death

Ephesians 2:1-5. And *you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...* Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

Part 4: The Mechanism of Death and Resurrection

To receive this new life, the believer must first participate in the death of Christ. Regeneration is inextricably linked to the cross and the empty tomb, mapping the believer's spiritual journey directly onto the physical suffering and resurrection of Jesus.

Life in Christ Alone

1 Corinthians 15:22. For as in Adam all die, even so *in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Crucified, Yet Living

Galatians 2:20. *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live;* yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Put to Death, Quickened by Spirit

1 Peter 3:18. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, *being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*

Buried by Baptism into Death

Romans 6:4-11. Therefore *we are buried with him by baptism into death:* that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection... Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Part 5: Harmonization & Conclusion

The Harmony of the Foundation

The foundational verses uniformly testify that regeneration is a violent transition from death to life, completely dependent on the grace of God and the active work of the Holy Ghost. It is not an evolution of human character, nor is it earned through works, but rather it is an instant and total re-creation of the spiritual man where God replaces a heart of stone with a heart of flesh.

Addressing the Complex Verses

- **1 Peter 3:18.** For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:
- **Romans 6:4-11.** Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life...

The Final Harmonization

The tension often arises when attempting to reconcile the spiritual, invisible act of regeneration with the physical, commanded act of water baptism, and understanding how a believer is simultaneously "dead" to the world and "alive" unto God. The harmony is found in understanding that regeneration perfectly mirrors Christ's atonement. Just as Christ was literally put to death in the flesh and quickened by the Spirit, the believer's old nature is legally and spiritually crucified with Him. Water baptism stands as the physical threshold and profound testimony of this burial and resurrection, uniting the believer into the body of Christ. We do not work for this new life; we surrender our dead lives to the cross, trusting entirely in the Spirit's power to raise us up as new creatures, completely justified, sealed, and alive unto God forevermore.

Article Six: The Election to Salvation

We often view the doctrine of election as an exclusive club, a divine lottery where God capriciously picks winners and losers from afar. Yet, Scripture reveals a vastly different reality. Election is not the arbitrary exclusion of the many, but the triumphant blueprint of God to build a redeemed family. It is a mystery grounded not in cold, deterministic machinery, but in the boundless love of a Creator who foreknew His children and wrote their names in the Book of Life before the world began.

Part 1: The Heart of the Father (Universal Call)

Before we can understand who is chosen, we must intimately understand the heart of the Chooser. God's ultimate desire is not the destruction of humanity, but the salvation and reconciliation of every living soul.

God's Will for All

1 Timothy 2:3-4. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; ***Who will have all men to be saved***, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

The Patience of the Lord

2 Peter 3:9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, ***not willing that any should perish***, but that all should come to repentance.

Part 2: The Original Blueprint (Creation and Covenant)

From the very beginning, God purposed to have a people set apart for His glory. He established covenants and promises to create a kingdom of priests, laying the foundation for the ultimate gathering of His elect.

The Image of God

Genesis 1:26-28. [Context of Creation] And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... ***And God blessed them...***

The Promise to Abraham

Genesis 12:1-3. [Context of the Call] ...and in thee shall ***all families of the earth be blessed***.

A Kingdom of Priests

Exodus 19:6. And ye shall be unto me ***a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation...***

The New Covenant Written

Jeremiah 31:31-33. ...I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and ***will be their God, and they shall be my people.***

Part 3: The Chosen Body (The Church)

The elect of God are not scattered, isolated individuals, but a unified body. Through the blood of Christ, God has chosen a generation from every nation, tribe, and tongue to be His peculiar people.

Called to be Saints

1 Corinthians 1:1-2. ...unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, ***called to be saints***, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord...

The Chosen Generation

1 Peter 2:9. But ye are a ***chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people***; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

He Hath Chosen You

John 15:16. Ye have not chosen me, but ***I have chosen you, and ordained you***, that ye should go and bring forth fruit...

The Mystery Revealed

Ephesians 3:1-11. [Context of the Gospel] That the Gentiles should be ***fellowheirs, and of the same body***, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

The Unity of the Elect

Ephesians 2:11-22. [Context of Jew and Gentile] ...having abolished in his flesh the enmity... for to make in himself of twain ***one new man***, so making peace...

One Body and One Faith

Ephesians 4:4-13. There is ***one body, and one Spirit***, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling...

The Great Multitude

Revelation 7:9-10. After this I beheld, and, lo, ***a great multitude, which no man could number***, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne...

Part 4: The Mystery of Predestination (Foreknowledge and the Book of Life)

God, existing entirely outside of time, foreknew who would accept the promised atonement. He predestinated this chosen body to be conformed to the image of Christ, recording their names in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world.

The Kingdom Prepared

Matthew 25:34. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom ***prepared for you from the foundation of the world:***

Elect According to Foreknowledge

1 Peter 1:1-2. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ... ***Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,*** through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...

Gathering the Elect

Matthew 24:31. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall ***gather together his elect from the four winds,*** from one end of heaven to the other.

The Justification of the Elect

Romans 8:33. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of ***God's elect?*** It is God that justifieth.

The Children of the Promise

Romans 9:6-8. ...They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but ***the children of the promise are counted for the seed.***

The Twelve Chosen

John 6:70. Jesus answered them, ***Have not I chosen you twelve,*** and one of you is a devil?

The Election Obtained It

Romans 11:7. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but ***the election hath obtained it,*** and the rest were blinded.

Conformed to His Image

Romans 8:29-30. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate ***to be conformed to the image of his Son...***

Chosen in Him

Ephesians 1:4-6. According as he hath *chosen us in him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Part 5: Harmonization & Conclusion

The Harmony of the Foundation

The foundational, simple verses explicitly declare that God is a loving Creator who is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). He designed salvation as an open invitation, desiring all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. His eternal blueprint was to build a kingdom of priests—a chosen generation and a unified body made up of every nation, kindred, and tongue. The election is the corporate body of Christ, a family prepared to receive the promises of God.

Addressing the Complex Verses

- **Romans 8:29-30.** For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.
- **Ephesians 1:4-5.** According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

The Final Harmonization

At first glance, these complex verses seem to suggest that God arbitrarily pre-selects certain individuals for salvation while unconditionally condemning the rest. However, when illuminated by the foundation, we see the perfect harmony. Predestination is inextricably tied to God's *foreknowledge*. He foreknew who would freely respond to the light and obey Christ's command to ask, seek, and knock. The understanding of election is that everyone's name was initially written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world, reflecting His desire that none perish. The "election" represents the fact that God predestinated the *destiny* of those in Christ—to be conformed to His image and adopted as children. It is not a fatalistic decree that overrides human will, but the glorious certainty that whoever rests in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ is eternally secure as part of His chosen body.

Article Seven: The Sovereignty of God

We naturally desire to sit upon the throne of our own lives, viewing God's absolute control as a threat to our freedom. We imagine a universe where man is the captain and God is merely a spectator waiting for our permission to act. Yet Scripture reveals a profound, comforting reality: His absolute authority is the very foundation of our peace and the only guarantee of true justice. The Sovereign Lord does not just reign over the distant cosmos; He intimately guides, judges, and extends mercy to His creation, commanding both the storm and the human heart.

Part 1: The Creator's Absolute Authority

Before we can understand how God deals with humanity, we must first recognize His position over all things. According to the Sola Scriptura mandate, we must approach these scriptures without denominational filters, letting the Bible establish God's unmatched rank. He is the uncaused cause, holding total ownership and infinite knowledge of the universe He built.

The First Cause

Genesis 1:1. In the beginning *God created the heaven and the earth.*

The All-Seeing Eye

Proverbs 15:3. The eyes of the LORD are in every place, *beholding the evil and the good.*

The Limitless Knowledge

Psalms 139:1-6. O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*

The Supreme Head

1 Chronicles 29:10-20. [David's Blessing] ...Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and *thou art exalted as head above all.* ...

The Unstoppable Will

Daniel 4:35. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and *he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth:* and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Part 2: The Sovereign in Mercy and Judgment

Because God is the supreme authority, He alone has the right to judge sin and the prerogative to extend mercy. He does not operate under human standards of fairness; rather, He is the very definition of righteousness. His judgments are pure, and His grace is a gift entirely unmerited by our own actions.

The Righteous Judge

Psalm 51:4. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: ***that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.***

The Impartial Ruler

1 Peter 1:17. And if ye call on the Father, ***who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work,*** pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

The Shepherd's Guidance

Psalm 23:1-6. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: ***he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*** ...

The Dispenser of Grace

Genesis 6:5-8. And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. ***But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.***

The Author of Calamity

Isaiah 45:7. [The Scope of Divine Power] I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: ***I the LORD do all these things.***

The Better Disciplinarian

2 Samuel 24:13-14. [David's Choice of Judgment] ...And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; ***for his mercies are great:*** and let me not fall into the hand of man.

Part 3: Human Responsibility under Divine Rule

A common logical fallacy is assuming that God's sovereignty eliminates human responsibility. The Scriptures clearly teach that while God is fully in control, He has designed a system where mankind is required to respond to His commands. He draws us by His power, yet demands our active faith and repentance.

The Source of Temptation

James 1:13-15. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: *for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

The Requirement of Faith

Hebrews 11:6. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that *he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*.

The Promise to the Repentant

2 Chronicles 7:14. If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; *then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin*, and will heal their land.

The Call to the Whosoever

Joel 2:32. And it shall come to pass, that *whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered...*

The Preservation of the Remnant

Romans 11:3-4. [Elijah's Plea] Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? *I have reserved to myself seven thousand men*, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

The Posture of the Believer

Hebrews 12:28. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby *we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*.

Part 4: The Mystery of the Sovereign Will

This is the "Strong Meat" of the study. When we encounter passages where God's ultimate will intersects with human action, human logic often fails. We must let the Bible interpret itself without

relying on philosophical frameworks or the traditions of men. God actively tests us, actively draws us, and extends His mercy according to His own unsearchable counsel.

The Judge's Perfect Character

Genesis 18:16-33. [Abraham Pleading for Sodom] ...That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: ***Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*** ...

The Divine Test

Genesis 22:1-18. [The Testing of Abraham] ...And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: ***for now I know that thou fearest God,*** seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. ...

The Drawing Power of God

John 6:44. ***No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:*** and I will raise him up at the last day.

The Prerogative of the Potter

Romans 9:15-18. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. ***Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.***

The Unmerited Salvation

Titus 3:3-7. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, ***Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,*** by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Part 5: Harmonization & Conclusion

As we synthesize these scriptures, we must ensure harmony from beginning to end without forcing human reasoning upon the text. The foundational truths must illuminate the complex mysteries.

The Harmony of the Foundation

The foundational verses clearly establish that God is the undisputed Creator, possessing limitless knowledge and absolute power over the universe (Genesis 1:1, Proverbs 15:3). He is a righteous

judge who commands men to seek Him, promising to reward those who humbly repent and call upon His name (Hebrews 11:6, Joel 2:32). These verses prove that human beings are held accountable for their sins, and God does not author the internal lust that tempts a man to evil (James 1:13-15). Yet, it is equally true that salvation is an unmerited gift; Noah found grace, and we are saved not by works of righteousness, but according to His mercy (Titus 3:5). God is the Sovereign King, and mankind is responsible to obey the commands of the King.

Addressing the Complex Verses

- **John 6:44.** No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.
- **Romans 9:18.** Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.
- **Isaiah 45:7.** I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

The Final Harmonization

These complex verses do not contradict the call for all men to repent; rather, they reveal the hidden mechanics behind salvation and judgment. When Isaiah 45:7 states God creates "evil," the context is the bringing of calamity and judgment upon wicked nations, not the creation of moral sin within the human heart (as James 1 proves). Furthermore, while a person must make a conscious, active choice to repent, they are completely unable to do so unless God first initiates the process. The process of salvation is initiated by the inherent power of God drawing a person to the light. If a man responds to the light and obeys Christ's command to ask, seek, and knock, he receives mercy. If a man loves darkness and rebels against the drawing of God, he is justly hardened in his own stubbornness (Romans 9:18). Thus, the tension is resolved: God remains the absolute Sovereign who initiates all grace, and man remains fully accountable for how he responds to the King's decree.

Article Eight: The Free Will of Man

We view the human will as either entirely autonomous or helplessly bound by a predetermined fate. Men often argue that we are merely a product of our environment, while some theological systems insist that every single human choice is rigidly pre-scripted before time began. Yet, the biblical reality reveals a profound, terrifying, and beautiful truth: God is sovereign enough to grant His creation the genuine power to choose or reject Him. The process of salvation is initiated by the inherent power of the Word drawing a person, but the individual must make a conscious choice based on their love for either light or darkness.

Part 1: The Sovereign Gift of Choice

God established man with the innate capacity to govern, decide, and respond to His voice. This profound liberty is not a violation of God's absolute sovereignty, but rather a deliberate demonstration of it, allowing for a relationship built on genuine willingness rather than mechanical force.

The Foundation of Dominion

Genesis 1:26. [Context of Creation] And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and ***let them have dominion*** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

The Divine Ultimatum

Deuteronomy 30:19. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore ***choose life***, that both thou and thy seed may live:

The Daily Decision

Joshua 24:15. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, ***choose you this day whom ye will serve***; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

The Universal Invitation

Revelation 22:17. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And ***whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely***.

Part 2: The Responsibility and Weight of the Will

Because man is granted the ability to choose, he is ultimately held responsible for the eternal consequences of his decisions. The Lord graciously provides the way of escape and healing, but man must willingly look to it and turn from his own destruction.

The Look of Faith

Numbers 21:8-9. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, ***when he looketh upon it, shall live.*** And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

The Command to Turn

Ezekiel 18:30-32. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and ***turn yourselves from all your transgressions;*** so iniquity shall not be your ruin... for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

The Rejection of the King

1 Samuel 8:18-19. [Context of Israel demanding a human monarch] And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; ***but we will have a king over us;***

The Weight of Judgment

2 Samuel 24:13-14. [Context of David's punishment] ...now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: ***let us fall now into the hand of the Lord;*** for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

Part 3: The Call of Christ and the Response of Man

The New Testament explicitly connects the reception of the Gospel to a willing, repentant heart responding to the truth. The proper response to being drawn by the light is to actively obey Christ's command to ask, seek, and knock.

The Narrow Gate

Matthew 7:13-14. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and ***few there be that find it.***

The Willing Follower

Luke 9:23-24. And he said to them all, ***If any man will come after me,*** let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

The Confession of the Heart

Romans 10:9-10. That if thou shalt *confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart* that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The Resolve to Return

Luke 15:17-18. [Context of the Prodigal Son] And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! *I will arise and go to my father*, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

The Rich Man's Refusal

Mark 10:21-22. [Context of the Rich Young Ruler] ...take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and *went away grieved*: for he had great possessions.

The Grace that Teaches

Titus 2:11-12. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness* and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

Part 4: The Resistance of the Will

The most heartbreaking reality of the Scriptures is that God's pure desire for all men to be saved can be actively, stubbornly resisted by the human heart. Rejection of the Gospel is not due to a divine lack of provision, but because men love their darkness rather than the light.

The Refusal to Come

John 5:40. And *ye will not come to me*, that ye might have life.

The Savior's Lament

Luke 13:34. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and *ye would not*!

The Woe of Unbelief

Matthew 11:20. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, *because they repented not*:

The Longsuffering of God

2 Peter 3:9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*.

Part 5: Harmonization & Conclusion

The Harmony of the Foundation

The Scriptures clearly and consistently demonstrate that God extends a universal, genuine invitation to all of mankind, setting before them life and death. The solemn responsibility to repent, believe the Gospel, and follow Christ rests securely upon the individual. God's grace has appeared to all men, and His explicit desire is that none should perish. Yet, in His sovereign wisdom, He allows the human heart the terrifying liberty to either embrace the cross in humility or stubbornly refuse it in pride. Repentance is not self-generated, but is the result of God's goodness leading a person to it.

Addressing the Complex Verses

- **John 6:44.** No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.
- **Romans 9:16.** So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

The Final Harmonization

These complex verses do not negate the free will of man; rather, they establish the profound *order* of salvation. A man cannot come to God entirely on his own initiative or generate his own spiritual awakening; the Father must first draw him through the inherent power of the Word. Salvation is ultimately anchored in the sheer mercy of God, not in human effort, willpower, or the "running" of the flesh. However, once God's grace appears and His Spirit draws, the individual must willingly respond. The drawing is entirely divine, but the yielding is intimately human. Thus, God remains utterly sovereign as the sole provider of salvation, while man remains entirely responsible for accepting or rejecting the free gift placed upon the table.

Article Nine: The Security of the Believer

We often view our spiritual security as a fragile thread, easily snapped by our daily failures and human weakness. We look at our own trembling hands and fear we might drop our salvation. Yet, Scripture reveals that our security rests not in our grip on Christ, but in His unyielding grip on us. True biblical security is founded entirely upon the finished work of the cross and the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, offering absolute peace amidst the storms of life.

Part 1: The Promise of Preservation

The foundation of the believer's security is the unchangeable promise of God. Salvation is wholly of God, a gift unmerited by our works, and preserved by His supreme authority.

Never Forsaken

Hebrews 13:5. Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, ***I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.***

The Unbreakable Grip

John 10:28-29. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, ***neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*** My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

The Persuasion of Paul

2 Timothy 1:12. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that ***he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him*** against that day.

Inseparable Love

Romans 8:35-39. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ***shall be able to separate us from the love of God,*** which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Part 2: The Seal of the Spirit and Imputed Righteousness

Our legal standing before God is not based on our flawed performance, but on the perfect obedience of Christ. The believer is permanently sealed by the Holy Spirit, which serves as the internal witness of our imputed righteousness.

The Justifier of the Believer

Romans 3:21-26. [The Law of Faith] ...To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: *that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

The Seal of Promise

Ephesians 1:13-14. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, *ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The Assurance of Eternal Life

1 John 5:13-15. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; *that ye may know that ye have eternal life*, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

Unblameable in His Sight

Colossians 1:21-22. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, *to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable* in his sight:

The Unbroken Chain of Salvation

Romans 8:29-30. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and *whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

Part 3: The Process of Perfection and Present Trials

While our justification is complete, our daily walk is a process of growth, transformation, and bearing fruit. Afflictions and trials do not threaten our security; rather, they are the tools God uses to conform us to His image.

The Living Sacrifice

Romans 12:1-3. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye *present your bodies a living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

The Weight of Glory

2 Corinthians 4:17. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, *worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*;

The Crown of Life

James 1:12. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, *he shall receive the crown of life*, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

The Author and Finisher

Philippians 1:6. Being confident of this very thing, that *he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

Apprehended by Christ

Philippians 3:12. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, *if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended* of Christ Jesus.

We Shall Be Like Him

1 John 3:2. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, *we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

Part 4: The Departure of the False and the Comfort of the True

The Scriptures draw a sharp distinction between those who genuinely rest in Christ and those who rely on their own works. Those who fall away completely reveal that they were never truly part of the body, while the true believer is kept from falling by the power of God.

The Prepared Place

John 14:1-4. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. *I go to prepare a place for you.*

The Guide of Truth

John 16:12-14. [The Promise of the Spirit] Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, *he will guide you into all truth*: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Kept From Falling

Jude 1:24-25. Now *unto him that is able to keep you from falling*, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

The Departure of the False

1 John 2:19. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for *if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us*: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

The Warning to the Self-Righteous

Matthew 7:23. [The Rejection of Works] And then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you: depart from me*, ye that work iniquity.

Part 5: Harmonization & Conclusion

The Harmony of the Foundation

The simple verses uniformly declare that salvation is an unmerited gift, secured entirely by the perfect obedience and finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross. The believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit, which serves as the permanent, internal witness of our imputed righteousness. Because of this divine seal, the believer rests confidently, knowing that no external force, man, or demon can pluck them from the Father's hand. He who began the good work will faithfully complete it.

Addressing the Complex Verses

- **Matthew 7:23.** And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.
- **Revelation 3:5.** [The Warning of the Book of Life] He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

The Final Harmonization

How do we reconcile the absolute security of the believer with the solemn warnings that names can be blotted out of the Book of Life? The tension resolves when we understand the difference between external attacks and internal rebellion. No one can forcefully remove a believer from Christ's hand (John 10). However, the finality of salvation is sealed only upon the death of the believer. If an individual turns to willful, unrepentant apostasy and sin unto death, they prove they have abandoned the imputed righteousness of Christ in favor of their own works, which are filthy rags. Matthew 7:23 reveals that many who claim security are actually trusting in their own "wonderful works," not Christ's. True biblical security is found solely by abiding in the Vine, trusting wholly in His finished cross, where there remains no condemnation for those who walk after the Spirit.

Article Ten: The Great Commission

We often view the Great Commission as a mandate to spread a specific theological system or complex denominational framework to the corners of the earth. Yet, Scripture reveals a profound simplicity that confounds the wise of this world: we are called only to proclaim the finished work of Christ and His clear commandments. Men tirelessly build massive philosophical structures like Calvinism's TULIP, mistakenly believing these systematic acronyms are the gospel itself. The biblical reality is far more potent and unadulterated; the true commission is the raw declaration of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, calling whosoever will to repentance and faith upon the original, unshakable foundation.

Part 1: The True Gospel Commission

The mandate given by Christ is direct and universally applicable, inviting any and all who hear to believe and be born of water and the Spirit. It is not a call to teach a restrictive, systematic theology of limited atonement, but to boldly declare the historical facts of His perfect sacrifice and victory.

The Command to All Nations

Matthew 28:19-20. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ***Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you***: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The Power unto Salvation

Romans 1:16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: ***for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth***; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

The Defined Message

1 Corinthians 15:1-4. [The core message Paul preached] Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, ***how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day*** according to the scriptures:

Appointed Judge of All

Acts 10:42-43. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. ***To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.***

Part 2: The Urgency of the Messengers

Those sent by God carry the purest news ever delivered to a dying world. The power to draw men to salvation lies inherently in the light of the Word of God itself, not in the eloquence of the preacher or the philosophical complexity of his arguments.

The Beautiful Feet

Isaiah 52:7. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!*

Winning Souls

Proverbs 11:30. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; *and he that winneth souls is wise.*

The Necessity of Preaching

Romans 10:13-15. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? *and how shall they hear without a preacher?* And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Warning Against Itching Ears

2 Timothy 4:1-5. I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.* For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Part 3: The Singular Foundation vs. The Systems of Men

Human traditions constantly seek to overlay the simplicity of Christ with systematic frameworks, effectively creating a different gospel. The apostles fiercely defended the exclusive foundation of Jesus Christ, warning against the leaven of man-made philosophies—like TULIP—that nullify the cross through the wisdom of words.

The Only Way

John 14:6. Jesus saith unto him, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

The Only Name

Acts 4:12. *Neither is there salvation in any other:* for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

The Only Mediator

1 Timothy 2:5. *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men,* the man Christ Jesus;

The Danger of Human Wisdom

1 Corinthians 1:17-21. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: *not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.* For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

The Original Principles

Hebrews 6:1-2. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; *not laying again the foundation* of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Part 4: Harmonization & Conclusion

The Harmony of the Foundation

The simpler scriptures universally establish that the Great Commission is the widespread, urgent proclamation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to all nations. The apostles were commanded to teach observation of Christ's explicit commands, not a theological framework forged centuries later by philosophers. This message is simple, powerful, and requires no worldly wisdom or semantic acrobatics to understand; it invites "whosoever will" to repent, be baptized, and rest entirely on the imputed righteousness of the Savior.

Addressing the Complex Verses

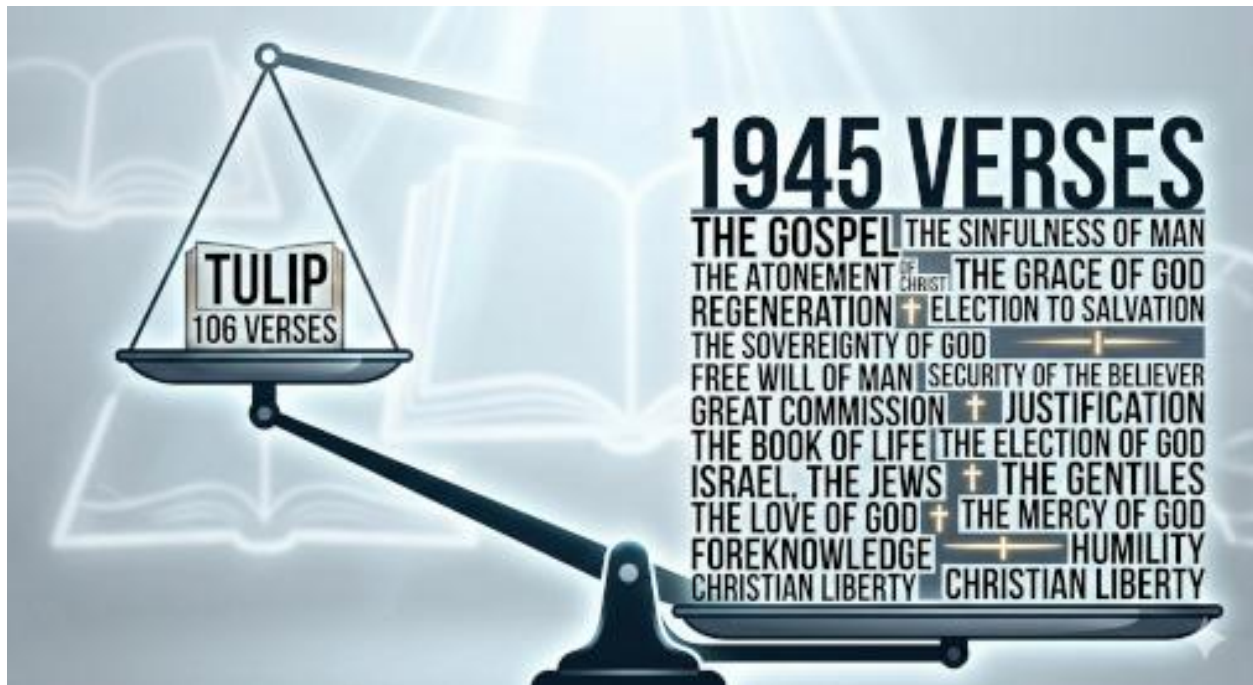
- **1 Corinthians 1:17-18.** [Paul speaking on wisdom] For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.
- **Hebrews 6:1-2.** Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

The Final Harmonization

These complex verses do not contradict the call to preach; rather, they serve as a fierce boundary line protecting the purity of the message. When men teach systematic theology (such as TULIP) under the guise of the Great Commission, they employ the "wisdom of words," thereby laying a *different* foundation. The writer of Hebrews explicitly defines the true foundation: repentance, faith, baptisms, resurrection, and judgment. Calvinism and similar philosophical systems attempt to lay a foundation of deterministic decrees and limited atonement, which are foreign to the original apostolic blueprint. By rejecting the convoluted structures of men and returning strictly to the principles of the doctrine of Christ, the tension is beautifully resolved. We do not need a new system to save the world; we only need the unchanging power of the original Gospel.

The Book of Life—The Strong Foundation

Exodus 32:32, Psalm 69:28, Isaiah 4:3, Jeremiah 1:5, Daniel 12:1-3, Matthew 7:13-14, Matthew 10:30, Luke 10:20, Luke 22:32, John 5:24, Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 1:4-6, Philippians 4:3, 2 Timothy 1:1, 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 1:2, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:14, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 12:11, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:7-8, Revelation 20:12, Revelation 20:15, Revelation 21:27, Revelation 22:19



We often view salvation as a locked vault, a guarantee secured in the past that requires nothing of our present. The human mind seeks the comfort of an irreversible decree, assuming that once a name is etched in heaven, it can never be erased regardless of how we live. Yet, Scripture reveals a much more profound and sobering reality. The Book of Life is not a static monument to human presumption, but a dynamic ledger of the living, warning us that the ultimate tragedy is to have our names blotted out through willful rebellion.

Part 1: The Master's Ledger (Names Written Before the Foundation)

God is not bound by time, and His foreknowledge encompasses all who would respond to His grace. He established a record before the world began, demonstrating that salvation has always been grounded in His eternal purpose, not human invention. Every name was recorded in this book from the foundation of the world, based on God's foreknowledge of who would accept the promised Atonement.

Known Before Birth

Jeremiah 1:5. Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and *before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee*, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

The Eternal Promise

Titus 1:2. In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, *promised before the world began*;

Chosen in Him

Ephesians 1:4-6. According as *he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

The Heavenly Registry

Revelation 13:8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, *whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb* slain from the foundation of the world.

The Ledger of the Lost

Revelation 17:8. [Context of the Beast] The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, *whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world*, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Part 2: The Present Assurance (Rejoicing in the Roster)

For those walking in the light, the knowledge that their names are recorded in heaven brings profound peace. It serves as a reminder that our ultimate joy is not in earthly victories, but in our present, secure standing in Jesus Christ.

The Greatest Joy

Luke 10:20. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, *because your names are written in heaven*.

Passed from Death to Life

John 5:24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and *shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

Fellow Labourers

Philippians 4:3. And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, *whose names are in the book of life.*

The Prophetic Deliverance

Daniel 12:1-3. ...and at that time thy people shall be delivered, *every one that shall be found written in the book.* And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

Part 3: The Threat of the Axe (False Security and the Call to Repent)

A fatal flaw in modern theology is the belief in unconditional, perpetual safety regardless of our ongoing walk. Christ and His messengers forcefully warned that even the "elect" heritage could be cut down, and that failing to maintain a burning, repentant faith would result in being forcefully removed from His body.

The Narrow Way

Matthew 7:13-14. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life*, and few there be that find it.

The Axe is Laid

Matthew 3:8-10. Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also *the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down*, and cast into the fire.

The Removed Candlestick

Revelation 2:5. [Warning to Ephesus] Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else *I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place*, except thou repent.

Spewed from His Mouth

Revelation 3:16. [Warning to Laodicea] So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, *I will spue thee out of my mouth*.

Part 4: The Tragic Erasure (Blotting Names from the Book)

The most terrifying reality presented in Scripture is that a name once written can be eternally removed. The doctrine of "Once Saved, Always Saved" crumbles before the explicit testimony that God Himself will blot out the names of those who turn to wickedness and fail to overcome. A crucial aspect is that names can be blotted out of the Book of Life due to unrepentant sin, unbelief, or idolatry.

The Plea for the Erased

Exodus 32:32-33. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, *Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book*.

Let Them Be Blotted Out

Psalms 69:28. *Let them be blotted out of the book of the living*, and not be written with the righteous.

The Promise to the Overcomer

Revelation 3:5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and *I will not blot out his name out of the book of life*, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

The Penalty for Altering the Word

Revelation 22:19. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, *God shall take away his part out of the book of life*, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

The Final Judgment

Revelation 20:12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and *the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

Cast Into the Fire

Revelation 20:15. And *whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Part 5: Harmonization & Conclusion

We must weave together the tension between God's sovereign knowledge and man's responsibility to overcome. The Scriptures do not contradict themselves; they provide a complete picture of a conditional covenant anchored by a faithful God.

The Harmony of the Foundation

The foundation of our topical study is crystal clear: the Book of Life is a genuine record kept by God. He writes names in it, offering assurance, joy, and peace to those who trust in His grace. Yet, the overwhelming testimony of the foundational texts proves that remaining in the Book is conditional. This sealing is permanent as long as they remain in Christ. The warnings of Jesus in Revelation, threatening to blot out names, remove candlesticks, and spew out the lukewarm, are not empty rhetoric. They dismantle the false comfort of "Once Saved, Always Saved," demonstrating that genuine faith is evidenced by a transformed life and its resulting works. Just as John the Baptist warned the "elect" lineage of Abraham that they could be replaced by stones if they lacked fruit, the believer is warned to endure, persevere with patience, and be faithful until death.

Addressing the Complex Verses

- **Romans 8:29-30.** For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.
- **2 Timothy 1:9.** Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

The Final Harmonization

The tension between a name being "predestinated" and a name being "blotted out" is resolved in the doctrine of God's perfect foreknowledge. God's foreknowledge is not a rigid determinism that

overrides human will; rather, He established a system designed to affirm imputed righteousness. Every name was recorded in this book from the foundation of the world, based on God's foreknowledge of who would accept the promised Atonement. The Book of Life contains the names of everyone initially, but it is a living ledger. Those who stubbornly reject the light, or who fall into unrepentant sin and fail to overcome, have their names tragically erased, proving that a crucial aspect is that names can be blotted out of the Book of Life due to unrepentant sin, unbelief, or idolatry. Therefore, the security of the believer rests entirely on Christ's imputed righteousness, maintained by an active, daily walk of faith, repentance, and holding fast to the end. The axe is real, the warning is severe, and the promise to the overcomer is eternal.

The Election of God

Genesis 21:12, Deuteronomy 7:6, Nehemiah 9:7, Psalm 33:12, Psalm 65:4, Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 45:5, Isaiah 65:9, Haggai 2:23, Matthew 20:16, Mark 13:20, Luke 6:13, Luke 10:20, Luke 18:7, John 6:44, John 13:18, John 15:16, John 15:19, John 17:6, Acts 9:15, Acts 13:48, Acts 22:14, Romans 8:28-30, Romans 9:11-13, Romans 9:15-16, Romans 9:23, Romans 11:5, Romans 11:7, Romans 16:13, 1 Corinthians 1:27, Galatians 1:15, Ephesians 1:4-6, Ephesians 1:11, Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Timothy 5:21, 2 Timothy 2:4, Titus 1:1, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 1:4-5, 1 Peter 2:6, 1 Peter 5:13, 2 Peter 1:10, 2 John 1:13

We often view election as a cold, closed ledger, a fatalistic lottery where God arbitrarily picks some for salvation and dooms the rest. Yet Scripture reveals election as a magnificent tool of grace, rooted in foreknowledge and centered entirely upon the person of Jesus Christ. It is not a locked door designed to keep the masses out, but rather a divine foundation established before the world began. God's election is a call to step out of darkness and into the chosen body of the Redeemer, where our names are sealed in the Book of Life.

Part 1: The Elect Servant (Jesus Christ)

Before we can understand the election of man, we must understand the election of the Son. Jesus Christ is the primary, foundational "Elect" of God, the chosen cornerstone upon which all other election is built.

The Delight of the Father

Isaiah 42:1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold; *mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth*; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

The Chosen Foundation

1 Peter 2:6. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, *elect, precious*: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Part 2: The Election of a Nation and a Lineage

God specifically chose the nation of Israel and the seed of Abraham, not because they were the greatest, but to serve as the vehicle to bring the Messiah and the Scriptures to the world. This is a corporate election to a historical purpose.

The Seed of Promise

Genesis 21:12. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for *in Isaac shall thy seed be called*.

The Chosen People

Deuteronomy 7:6. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: *the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people* unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

The Faithful Heart

Nehemiah 9:7. Thou art the LORD the God, *who didst choose Abram*, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham.

The Call of Cyrus

Isaiah 45:5. [Context of God raising a secular king to deliver Israel] I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, *though thou hast not known me.*

The Inheritor of Mountains

Isaiah 65:9. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and *mine elect shall inherit it*, and my servants shall dwell there.

Part 3: The Election to a Specific Earthly Task

God sovereignly chooses specific individuals to perform specific earthly tasks, such as the Apostles or the Prophets. This election is about service, suffering, and duty on earth, not necessarily a guarantee of unconditional eternal salvation.

The Chosen Twelve

Luke 6:13. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them *he chose twelve*, whom also he named apostles.

The Known Betrayer

John 13:18. I speak not of you all: *I know whom I have chosen*: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

The Vessel of Suffering

Acts 9:15. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for *he is a chosen vessel unto me*, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

The Signet Ring

Haggai 2:23. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: *for I have chosen thee*, saith the LORD of hosts.

The Separated Apostle

Galatians 1:15. But when it pleased God, *who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me* by his grace.

Part 4: The Election of the Believer

The election of the believer is not an arbitrary selection made in a vacuum, but a deliberate choice based on God's foreknowledge of who would accept the promised Atonement. Believers are chosen *in Him* and called out of the world to bear fruit.

The Blessed Nation

Psalms 33:12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people *whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance*.

The Approach Unto God

Psalms 65:4. *Blessed is the man whom thou choosest*, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

The Many Called

Matthew 20:16. So the last shall be first, and the first last: for *many be called, but few chosen*.

The Shortened Days

Mark 13:20. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but *for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen*, he hath shortened the days.

The Written Names

Luke 10:20. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, *because your names are written in heaven*.

The Vindicated Elect

Luke 18:7. And shall not God *avenge his own elect*, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

The Drawing of the Father

John 6:44. *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:* and I will raise him up at the last day.

The Ordained to Fruit

John 15:16. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,* and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

The Called Out

John 15:19. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but *I have chosen you out of the world*, therefore the world hateth you.

The Given Ones

John 17:6. I have manifested thy name unto the men *which thou gavest me out of the world:* thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

The Glad Believers

Acts 13:48. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and *as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*

The Known Will

Acts 22:14. And he said, *The God of our fathers hath chosen thee*, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

The Golden Chain

Romans 8:28-30. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate* to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

The Remnant of Grace

Romans 11:5. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant *according to the election of grace*.

The Obtained Promise

Romans 11:7. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but *the election hath obtained it*, and the rest were blinded.

The Chosen in the Lord

Romans 16:13. Salute Rufus *chosen in the Lord*, and his mother and mine.

The Foolish Things

1 Corinthians 1:27. But *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world* to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

The Foundation of the World

Ephesians 1:4-6. According as *he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

The Counsel of His Will

Ephesians 1:11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, *being predestinated according to the purpose of him* who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

The Prepared Works

Ephesians 2:10. For we are his workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

The Holy and Beloved

Colossians 3:12. Put on therefore, *as the elect of God*, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.

The Known Election

1 Thessalonians 1:4. Knowing, brethren beloved, *your election of God.*

The Belief of the Truth

2 Thessalonians 2:13. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation* through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

The Elect Angels

1 Timothy 5:21. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and *the elect angels*, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

The Chosen Soldier

2 Timothy 2:4. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him *who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

The Faith of the Elect

Titus 1:1. Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, *according to the faith of God's elect*, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.

The Elect by Foreknowledge

1 Peter 1:2. *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

The Reserved Inheritance

1 Peter 1:4-5. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, *Who are kept by the power of God through faith* unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The Elected Sister

1 Peter 5:13. The church that is at Babylon, *elected together with you*, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.

The Sure Calling

2 Peter 1:10. Wherefore the rather, brethren, *give diligence to make your calling and election sure*: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.

The Elect Lady

2 John 1:13. The children of *thy elect sister* greet thee. Amen.

Part 5: Harmonization & Conclusion

The Harmony of the Foundation

The simple, foundational verses establish that God's election is deeply rooted in His foreknowledge. It is not a blind, deterministic draft. God chose Christ first as the true Elect cornerstone, and then He chose those who are *in Christ* through faith. He elected the nation of Israel for a purpose, and He routinely elects specific men for specific tasks. For the believer, salvation is initiated by the inherent power of the Word of God which draws a person to Christ, but the individual must make a moral choice to step into the light. Everyone's name was initially written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world, proving that His election is a wide-open invitation of grace, not a pre-selected restriction.

Addressing the Complex Verses

Romans 9:11-13. (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

- **Romans 9:15-16.** For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.
- **Romans 9:23.** And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.

The Final Harmonization

When we look at the complex verses in Romans 9 regarding Jacob and Esau, or the "vessels of mercy," human tradition often leaps to the conclusion that God creates certain individuals specifically to damn them and others to save them without their consent. However, by harmonizing this with the foundation, we see this is a severe misunderstanding. The election of Jacob over Esau was an election to a historical lineage—bringing the Messiah to the world—not a decree of Esau's eternal damnation. Furthermore, God's mercy is based on His own perfect terms, which is faith in Christ's imputed righteousness, rather than human works or "running". Because God operates on

a two-book judgment model governed by the Book of Life, we understand that His preparation of vessels unto glory is entirely consistent with His foreknowledge. He predestinates the *destination* of the believer (to be conformed to the image of His Son), but He does not forcefully dictate who chooses to believe. Election is the glorious reality that God has sovereignly designed the ship, chosen the Captain, and planned the destination—and He invites whosoever will to climb aboard.

Israel, the Jews: The Elect, "The Chosen" People

Genesis 12:2, Genesis 14:13, Genesis 17:10-11, Genesis 22:17, Genesis 35:22, Genesis 40:15, Genesis 49:28, Genesis 50:25, Exodus 2:11-12, Exodus 5:17, Exodus 9:7, Exodus 12:40-42, Exodus 19:4-6, Exodus 28:1, Exodus 32:9, Exodus 33:16, Leviticus 18:4, Leviticus 20:24, Numbers 10:36, Numbers 14:33, Numbers 18:6, Numbers 32:18, Deuteronomy 5:15, Deuteronomy 6:12, Deuteronomy 7:6-7, Deuteronomy 9:7, Deuteronomy 9:24, Deuteronomy 12:8-11, Deuteronomy 14:2, Deuteronomy 14:21, Deuteronomy 16:18, Deuteronomy 32:9, Deuteronomy 32:15, Deuteronomy 33:29, Joshua 3:17, Joshua 5:6, Joshua 14:1-5, Judges 2:13, Judges 4:2, Judges 6:2, Judges 6:6, 1 Samuel 8:5, 1 Samuel 8:7, 1 Samuel 8:22, 1 Kings 8:53, 1 Kings 11:31, 1 Kings 12:19-20, 2 Kings 17:32, 2 Kings 18:11, 2 Kings 23:33, 2 Kings 24:16, 2 Kings 25:11, 1 Chronicles 16:13, Ezra 1:1-4, Psalm 48:3, Psalm 76:1, Psalm 96:5, Psalm 105:6, Psalm 115:3-4, Psalm 135:4, Psalm 137:6, Isaiah 2:8, Isaiah 27:12, Isaiah 41:8, Isaiah 45:4, Isaiah 51:2, Jeremiah 2:11-13, Jeremiah 7:25, Jeremiah 8:5, Jeremiah 13:9, Jeremiah 26:4, Jeremiah 33:26, Jeremiah 35:15, Jeremiah 44:4, Jeremiah 44:17, Ezekiel 20:18, Ezekiel 20:30, Ezekiel 38:17, Amos 1:1, Malachi 2:4-7, John 8:33, John 8:39, John 8:41, John 9:28-29, Acts 6:14, Acts 7:51, Acts 21:21, Acts 22:3, Romans 1:28, Romans 3:2, Romans 9:4-5, 2 Corinthians 11:22, 1 Thessalonians 4:5, Hebrews 9:1, Hebrews 9:8-11, Hebrews 10:1

The Gentiles: The Predestined Whom God Always Planned to Save

Leviticus 18:3, Leviticus 25:44, Deuteronomy 7:3, Deuteronomy 18:14, 1 Samuel 14:6, 2 Kings 17:7-8, 2 Chronicles 20:6, Nehemiah 5:9, Esther 9:1, Esther 9:5, Psalm 2:1, Psalm 2:8, Psalm 9:5, Psalm 9:20, Psalm 22:28, Psalm 33:10, Psalm 47:8, Psalm 79:1, Psalm 94:10, Isaiah 2:2, Isaiah 9:1, Isaiah 11:10, Isaiah 14:1, Isaiah 42:6, Isaiah 52:1, Isaiah 60:10, Jeremiah 2:11, Jeremiah 10:2, Lamentations 1:10, Matthew 10:5, Matthew 15:26, Luke 2:32, Luke 21:24, Luke 24:47, John 7:35, Acts 4:27, Acts 9:15, Acts 10:28, Acts 10:34-45, Acts 11:2-3, Acts 13:46, Acts 13:48-49, Acts 15:12, Acts 15:14, Acts 21:28-29, Romans 1:16, Romans 1:21, Romans 1:23, Romans 1:25, Romans 1:28-32, Romans 2:9, Romans 2:14, Romans 2:26, Romans 3:9, Romans 9:24, Romans 10:12, Romans 11:25, 1 Corinthians 12:2, Galatians 2:7-8, Galatians 3:8, Ephesians 2:11-12, Ephesians 2:14, Ephesians 4:19, 1 Thessalonians 4:5, Revelation 11:2

Romans 9: Israel (the Elect), Hardens Its Heart

Exodus 14:10, Exodus 32:9, Numbers 14:3, Numbers 14:11, Deuteronomy 9:7, Deuteronomy 9:24, Deuteronomy 32:15, Psalm 78:22, Isaiah 1:2, Isaiah 2:8, Isaiah 29:13, Isaiah 51:12, Isaiah 57:5, Isaiah 63:10, Isaiah 65:5, Jeremiah 2:11-13, Jeremiah 3:6-8, Jeremiah 6:13, Jeremiah 7:4, Jeremiah 8:5, Jeremiah 31:32, Ezekiel 16:59, Ezekiel 33:31, Micah 2:2, Matthew 3:9, Matthew 15:7-9, Matthew 23:31-33, Acts 7:9, Acts 7:27, Acts 7:35, Acts 7:39, Acts 7:51, Acts 13:27, Romans 2:5, Romans 4:9, Romans 4:22, Romans 9, Romans 10:3, 2 Corinthians 3:13-15, Philippians 3:7-9, Ephesians 4:30, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5

Romans 9 (Context): The Distinction Between Jews and Gentiles is No Longer Relevant

Romans 1:13, Romans 1:16, Romans 2:9-10, Romans 2:12-15, Romans 2:17-18, Romans 2:20, Romans 2:23-29, Romans 3:1, Romans 3:9, Romans 3:19-21, Romans 3:27-29, Romans 3:31, Romans 4:5, Romans 4:9, Romans 4:11-14, Romans 4:16, Romans 4:19-20, Romans 5:1-2, Romans 5:13, Romans 5:20, Romans 6:14, Romans 7:1-9, Romans 7:12, Romans 7:14, Romans 7:16, Romans 7:21-23, Romans 7:25, Romans 8:2-4, Romans 8:7, Romans 8:33, Romans 9:4, Romans 9:6, Romans 9:24-25, Romans 9:27, Romans 9:30-33, Romans 10:1, Romans 10:4-5, Romans 10:8-13, Romans 10:19, Romans 10:21, Romans 11:2, Romans 11:7, Romans 11:11-13, Romans 11:25-26, Romans 13:8-10, Romans 15:10-12, Romans 15:16, Romans 15:18, Romans 15:27, Romans 16:4

Romans 9-10 (Main Point): Whosoever Calls on the Name of the Lord

Genesis 22:18, Psalm 42:1-2, Psalm 63:1-2, Psalm 84:2, Psalm 107:9, Isaiah 45:21-22, Amos 8:11-13, Matthew 5:6, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 9:12, Matthew 10:14, Matthew 10:32, Matthew 10:42, Matthew 16:25, Matthew 18:4, Matthew 21:44, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 3:35, Mark 8:35, Mark 8:38, Mark 9:41, Luke 1:53, Luke 6:21, Luke 6:25, Luke 18:11-14, John 1:7, John 1:29, John 3:16-17, John 4:42, John 5:11, John 6:27, John 6:35, John 6:48, John 6:51, John 11:51-52, John 12:32, John 12:47, Acts 13:39, Romans 1:17, Romans 3:5, Romans 3:21-23, Romans 5:3-4, Romans 5:12, Romans 9:10, Romans 9:33, Romans 10:3-4, Romans 10:11-12, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Galatians 3:8-9, Galatians 3:16, Galatians 3:29, 1 Timothy 2:4, 1 Timothy 2:6, 1 Timothy 4:10, Hebrews 2:9, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:14, 1 John 5:19

Romans 11 (Conclusion): Gentiles, Grafted into Israel

Psalm 89:16, Isaiah 45:24-25, Isaiah 61:10, Matthew 6:33, Romans 4:5-6, Romans 4:11, Romans 4:24, Romans 9:30, Romans 11, 2 Corinthians 3:14-16, Philippians 3:9

Ephesians 1-2: The Wall Between Jews (the Elect) and Gentiles Broken Down

Exodus 23:32, Deuteronomy 7:2-3, Deuteronomy 12:29-31, Deuteronomy 18:9-14, Joshua 23:12, Judges 2:1-3, 1 Samuel 17:36, Jeremiah 2:18, Matthew 16:26-27, John 4:9, Acts 10:15, Acts 10:28, Acts 11:2-3, Acts 15:8-9, Ephesians 2:1

The Love of God

Deuteronomy 7:7-8, Deuteronomy 7:13, Deuteronomy 10:15, Deuteronomy 10:18, Deuteronomy 23:5, Job 7:17, Isaiah 38:17, Isaiah 43:3, Isaiah 49:15-16, Isaiah 63:9, Jeremiah 31:3, Hosea 11:4, Zephaniah 3:17, Malachi 1:2-3, John 3:16, John 15:9-10, John 16:27, John 17:23, John 17:26, Romans 5:5, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:39, 2 Corinthians 9:7, 2 Corinthians 13:11, 2 Corinthians

13:14, Ephesians 2:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:16, Titus 3:4-7, Hebrews 12:6, 1 John 2:5, 1 John 3:1, 1 John 4:8-10, 1 John 4:12, 1 John 4:16, 1 John 4:19, Jude 1:21

The Grace of God

Psalms 45:2, Psalm 84:11, Proverbs 3:34, Zechariah 4:7, Zechariah 12:10, Luke 2:40, Luke 4:22, John 1:14, John 1:16-17, Acts 4:33, Acts 11:23, Acts 15:11, Acts 18:27, Acts 20:24, Acts 20:32, Romans 3:8, Romans 3:24, Romans 4:4, Romans 4:16, Romans 5:15, Romans 5:17, Romans 5:20-21, Romans 6:1, Romans 6:14-15, Romans 11:5-6, Romans 12:3, Romans 15:15, 1 Corinthians 1:4, 1 Corinthians 1:12, 1 Corinthians 3:10, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2 Corinthians 8:1, 2 Corinthians 9:8, 2 Corinthians 9:14, 2 Corinthians 12:9, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Galatians 1:15, Galatians 2:9, Galatians 5:4, Ephesians 1:6-7, Ephesians 2:5, Ephesians 2:7-8, Ephesians 3:7, Ephesians 4:29, Ephesians 6:24, Colossians 4:6, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 2 Timothy 2:1, Titus 3:7, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 10:29, Hebrews 12:15, Hebrews 12:28, Hebrews 13:9, James 1:17, James 4:6, 1 Peter 1:10, 1 Peter 1:13, 1 Peter 3:7, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 Peter 5:10, 2 Peter 3:18, 3 John 1:3-4, Jude 1:4

The Mercy of God

Exodus 34:6-7, Leviticus 16:30, Nehemiah 9:17, Job 25:4, Psalm 32:1, Psalm 51:1, Psalm 51:9-13, Psalm 65:3, Psalm 86:5, Psalm 86:15-16, Psalm 103:2-4, Psalm 103:7-8, Psalm 103:12, Psalm 130:3, Psalm 143:2, Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 33:24, Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 44:22, Isaiah 53:10-12, Isaiah 54:9-10, Isaiah 55:1-3, Isaiah 55:6-11, Jeremiah 31:34, Jeremiah 33:8, Jeremiah 50:20, Daniel 9:9, Jonah 4:2, Micah 7:18-19, Zechariah 13:1, Matthew 1:21, Luke 1:77, Luke 24:47, Acts 3:19, Acts 10:43, Acts 13:38-39, Romans 4:4-8, Romans 5:11, Romans 5:20, Romans 11:26-27, 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Ephesians 1:6-8, Ephesians 2:4-9, Colossians 1:14, Colossians 2:13-14, Philemon 1:18-19, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 8:12, Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 10:17, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 Peter 3:18, 1 John 1:7-9, 1 John 2:12, 1 John 4:7-8, Revelation 1:5, Revelation 7:14

The Sovereignty of God

Genesis 17:7-8, Psalm 4:3, Psalm 65:4, Psalm 69:23, Psalm 78:70-71, Psalm 106:4-5, Psalm 110:3, Psalm 115:14-15, Psalm 135:4, Proverbs 16:30, Isaiah 6:9-10, Isaiah 29:10-12, Isaiah 44:18, Jeremiah 32:39-40, Matthew 11:25-30, Matthew 13:15, Matthew 13:19, Matthew 22:14, Mark 4:15, Luke 6:13, Luke 8:12, Luke 19:42, John 6:37, John 6:44, John 6:65, John 6:70, John 10:28-29, John 12:46, John 13:11, John 13:18, John 15:16, John 17:12, Acts 2:39, Acts 2:47, Acts 3:25-26, Acts 9:15-16, Acts 13:46-48, Romans 8:29-30, Romans 11:5-7, Ephesians 1:3-6, Ephesians 1:11-12, Ephesians 1:18, Ephesians 2:4-10, Ephesians 4:18, Philippians 1:29, Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, 2 Timothy 2:19, Titus 3:3-7, 1 John 2:11, 1 John 4:10, 1 John 4:19

The Counsels and Purposes of God

Deuteronomy 29:29, Psalm 33:11, Proverbs 19:21, Isaiah 5:19, Isaiah 14:24, Isaiah 14:27, Isaiah 25:1, Isaiah 28:29, Isaiah 40:13-14, Isaiah 46:11, Jeremiah 4:28, Jeremiah 32:19, Jeremiah 49:20, Jeremiah 50:45, Micah 4:12, Matthew 24:36, Luke 7:30, Acts 1:7, Acts 2:23, Acts 4:28, Acts 20:27, Romans 8:28, Romans 9:11, Ephesians 1:9-11, Ephesians 3:11, 2 Timothy 1:9, Hebrews 6:17

The Foreknowledge of God

Deuteronomy 10:17, Deuteronomy 16:19, 2 Chronicles 19:7, Job 34:19, Proverbs 24:23-24, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 22:16, Luke 20:21, Acts 10:34, Romans 4:17, Romans 8:29-30, Galatians 2:6, Galatians 6:7-8, Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25, James 2:1-13, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 1:17

The Will of Man, Freely Applied in Prayer

Genesis 12:8, Genesis 28:20, Genesis 32:26, Exodus 32:11, 1 Samuel 1:15, 1 Kings 8:33, 2 Chronicles 7:14, 2 Chronicles 30:27, 2 Chronicles 32:20, 2 Chronicles 33:12, Nehemiah 1:6, Job 8:5, Job 11:13, Psalm 5:2-3, Psalm 10:17, Psalm 17:1, Psalm 25:1, Psalm 27:7-8, Psalm 34:6, Psalm 42:4, Psalm 55:1, Psalm 56:9, Psalm 61:1, Psalm 62:8, Psalm 65:2, Psalm 73:28, Psalm 80:18, Psalm 86:7, Psalm 99:6, Psalm 102:2, Psalm 108:6, Psalm 116:4, Psalm 119:58, Psalm 119:145, Psalm 143:1, Psalm 145:18, Proverbs 15:8, Proverbs 30:8, Ecclesiastes 5:2, Isaiah 55:6, Isaiah 58:9, Jeremiah 29:13, Jeremiah 36:7, Lamentations 3:41, Zechariah 12:10, Matthew 4:10, Matthew 6:5, Matthew 6:7, Matthew 6:9-13, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:7-11, Matthew 21:22, Luke 11:8, Luke 18:1-7, Luke 22:42, Luke 23:42, John 4:22-24, John 14:13, John 15:16, John 16:23-24, Acts 7:59, Acts 9:11, Acts 22:16, Romans 8:15, Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 14:15, Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 2:18, Ephesians 3:14, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 3:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 2 Thessalonians 3:5, 1 Timothy 2:8, 1 Timothy 5:5, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 10:19, Hebrews 10:22, James 1:6, James 5:16-17, 1 John 5:14, Jude 1:20, Revelation 5:8

The Conscience

Genesis 42:21, 2 Samuel 24:10, Job 27:6, Proverbs 20:27, Matthew 27:3, Acts 2:37, Acts 23:1, Acts 24:16, Acts 26:9, Romans 2:15, Romans 9:1, Romans 13:5, Romans 14:21-22, 1 Corinthians 10:28-32, 2 Corinthians 1:12, 2 Corinthians 4:2, 2 Corinthians 5:11, 1 Timothy 1:19, 1 Timothy 3:9, 1 Timothy 4:2, Titus 1:15, Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 10:1-14, Hebrews 10:22, Hebrews 13:18, 1 Peter 2:19, 1 Peter 3:16, 1 Peter 3:21, 1 John 3:20-21

Humility

Matthew 23:8-10, Luke 14:8, Luke 14:10, Luke 17:10, Romans 12:3, Romans 12:10, Romans 12:16, 1 Corinthians 3:21, 1 Corinthians 10:12, 2 Corinthians 10:17, Galatians 5:26, Ephesians 4:17, Philippians 2:3, Philippians 2:5-8, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:5-6

Christian Liberty

Leviticus 25:10-17, Psalm 116:16-17, Psalm 119:45, Isaiah 42:7, Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18, John 8:32, John 8:34, John 8:36, Acts 26:12-20, Romans 6:7, Romans 6:18, Romans 6:20, Romans 7:6, Romans 8:2, Romans 8:15, Romans 8:21, 1 Corinthians 7:22, 1 Corinthians 8:9, 1 Corinthians 9:19, 1 Corinthians 10:29, 1 Corinthians 10:32, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 2:4-5, Galatians 3:13, Galatians 4:3-5, Galatians 4:22-26, Galatians 4:31, Galatians 5:1, Galatians 5:13, Colossians 1:13, Colossians 2:20, Hebrews 2:15, James 1:25, James 2:12, 1 Peter 2:16, 2 Peter 2:19, Jude 1:4.

Part V: Answering Objections

The Echo Chamber – Answering the Critics

The Problem of Pre-Programmed Theology

You have seen the overwhelming weight of evidence—thousands of verses gathered topic by topic, harmonized without contradiction. You have seen the "Whole Counsel of God" regarding the Book of Life, the Atonement, and the Will of Man.

Now, imagine a strict Calvinist or an institutional theologian picking up this book. They will likely flip past those thousands of verses and try to attack the conclusion. But they have a problem.

For the last 400 years, the institutional church has been arguing against the same two enemies: Pelagius (who said humans are naturally good) and Arminius (who said humans choose God). They have memorized the scripts for these debates. They have "canned responses" ready to fire off instantly. They typically rely on a "cherry-picked" list of about 50 favorite verses to defend their system.

However, this book presents **new material**. We are not arguing for Pelagianism, and we are not arguing for standard Arminianism. We are presenting a **Third Option**—the "Topical Bible Study" view—based strictly on the plain reading of the King James Bible. We have provided a dataset of *thousands* of verses that dwarf their list of fifty. [CLICK HERE](#)

When an institutional debater reads this, they hit a wall. They have never had to answer these specific arguments before. They don't have a pre-packaged answer for the "Mixture" or the "Blotting Out" described in Exodus. So, instead of slowing down to think and actually engage with the text, they **default** to their old scripts. They pretend this book is just "standard Arminianism" or "humanism" so they can use the answers they learned in seminary.

This is like comparing **Apples to Oranges**. They are attacking a **Strawman**—arguing against a position we do not hold—because they are terrified to face the position we *do* hold. They are fighting the ghosts of the past to avoid the Scripture of the present.

In this Appendix, we list these "Canned Responses." We show exactly how the Calvinist will try to dodge the real argument, and we provide the direct Biblical answer that proves they are not listening to the text.

Objection 1: The "Corpse" Argument (Total Depravity)

The Canned Response:

The Calvinist argues that the phrase "Dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1) means total inability. They say a sinner is exactly like a physical corpse in a morgue. They claim our "Mixture" theory (that humans have a conscience and can respond) is actually humanism because a dead

body cannot "knock," "seek," or "hear." They will quote Romans 3:11: "There is none that seeketh after God."

The Biblical Rebuttal:

This is an "Apple vs. Orange" error. They are attacking an idea we don't believe (that humans are naturally good) instead of addressing what we actually said (that humans are separated from God but still conscious).

- **The Definition of "Dead":** In the Bible, death often means *separation*, not that everything has shut down. The Prodigal Son was called "*dead, and is alive again*" (Luke 15:24). But while he was "dead" in the pig pen, he still had the ability to "come to himself," think clearly, and walk home. He was spiritually separated, not a robot.
- **The Evidence of Capacity: Acts 10:1-4** describes Cornelius, a Gentile who wasn't saved yet, but he "*prayed to God alway.*" If the "Corpse" theory were true, Cornelius couldn't exist in the Bible.
- **The Context of Romans 3:** When Paul says "none seeketh," he is quoting the Old Testament to charge humanity with being sinful by nature. He is not saying humans lack the *capacity* to respond when God draws them. The command to "*Seek the LORD*" (Isaiah 55:6) proves the capacity is there.

Objection 2: The "Immutability" Argument (Unconditional Election)

The Canned Response:

The Calvinist claims that because God is sovereign and never changes, He cannot write a name in the Book of Life and then erase it later. They argue that election is an eternal decree that cannot be changed. They will quote Acts 13:48: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

The Biblical Rebuttal:

This objection uses philosophical logic ("God can't change His mind") to override what the Bible explicitly says.

- **The Textual Fact: Exodus 32:33** is crystal clear: "*Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.*" God explicitly connects keeping your name in the book to your behavior (sinning vs. overcoming).
- **The Logic of Erasure:** You cannot erase a name that was never written down. For the Calvinist view to be true, God must be tricking us—writing a name He knows He will erase later—or the "Book" in these verses isn't the Book of Life (which contradicts **Revelation 3:5**).

- **The Meaning of "Ordained":** The word in Acts 13:48 (*tasso*) can mean "disposed" or "aligned." But even if you accept "ordained," the Bible teaches we are chosen *in Christ* (Ephesians 1:4). The "ordination" is the plan of salvation for believers, not a lottery of individuals picked before time began.

Objection 3: The "Potter's Clay" Argument (Romans 9)

The Canned Response:

The Calvinist argues that Romans 9 teaches that God picks individuals for heaven or hell before they are born. They cite Jacob and Esau (Romans 9:11) to prove God chooses people without caring about their choices.

The Biblical Rebuttal:

They are reading a letter about nations and pretending it's a letter about individuals.

- **The Context is Nations:** Paul quotes Malachi 1:2-3 regarding Jacob and Esau. Malachi was written long after both men died and refers explicitly to the nations of **Israel and Edom**. God chose Israel for *service* (to bring the Messiah), not necessarily every individual Israelite for *heaven* (we know this because many Israelites died in unbelief).
- **The Potter's Context:** Paul references **Jeremiah 18**, where God (the Potter) threatens to destroy a *nation* (Israel) if they do evil. But He also promises to relent if they repent. The Potter's authority is dynamic—He responds to what the clay does. It is not a fixed script of fatalism.

Objection 4: The "Effectual Dragging" Argument (Irresistible Grace)

The Canned Response:

The Calvinist claims that when God "draws" a man (John 6:44), it is an irresistible force (like dragging a heavy net). They argue that verses showing people resisting God (like Acts 7:51) only refer to resisting the "external call" (the preacher's voice), not the actual work of the Holy Spirit inside them.

The Biblical Rebuttal:

This redefines words to protect their System.

- **The Text of Resistance:** Stephen in **Acts 7:51** is explicit: "*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*" He does not say "You are resisting the prophet." He identifies the *Person* of the Spirit as the one being resisted.

- **The Problem of "All Men":** In **John 12:32**, Jesus uses the same Greek word (*helko*) to say He will "*draw all men unto me.*" If "draw" means "irresistibly drag," then Universalism is true (everyone is saved). Since everyone is not saved, the "drawing" must be an attraction you can resist, not a forced conversion.
- **The Will of Man: Matthew 23:37** shows Jesus willing to gather Jerusalem, but "*ye would not.*" The Calvinist claim that God *secretly* didn't want to gather them makes Jesus's tears a fake theatrical performance.

Objection 5: The "Double Jeopardy" Argument (Limited Atonement)

The Canned Response:

The Calvinist argues that it is unjust for God to punish sins twice—once on the Cross and once in Hell. Therefore, Christ could not have died for the people who aren't elected. They cite John 10:11 ("*giveth his life for the sheep*").

The Biblical Rebuttal:

They are using a human legal theory ("Double Jeopardy") to cancel out Scripture.

- **The "Smoking Gun": 2 Peter 2:1** states clearly that false teachers (who bring swift destruction on themselves) deny the Lord that "*bought them.*" The Lord paid the price for the very people who end up in hell.
- **The Definition of World: 1 John 2:2** says Christ is the propitiation for "*the whole world.*" To make this mean "The Elect," you have to rewrite the dictionary.
- **The Payment vs. The Receipt:** A pardon can be fully paid for and issued by the Governor, but if the prisoner refuses to accept it, he stays in jail. The limitation is in the *rejection*, not in the *provision*.

Objection 6: The "False Professor" Argument (Perseverance of the Saints)

The Canned Response:

The Calvinist argues that anyone who falls away was "never saved to begin with." They cite 1 John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us."

The Biblical Rebuttal:

They take one specific example (Antichrists leaving a church) and turn it into a universal rule for everyone, ignoring the warnings given to true believers.

- **The Branch in the Vine:** In **John 15:2**, Jesus describes a branch that is "*in me*" (connected, saved) that stops bearing fruit and is "*taken away*" and "*burned*." You cannot be "in Christ" and "never saved."
- **The Grafted Branch:** In **Romans 11:20-22**, Paul warns believing Gentiles (who "stand by faith") that they can be "*cut off*" just like the Jews were.
- **The Returning Sow:** **2 Peter 2:20** describes those who have "*escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord*" (saved/washed) but act like a pig returning to the mud. They were clean, and they went back to the filth. They were not "pigs all along" who faked being clean; they were washed pigs who chose the dirt again.

Objection 7: The "Fixed State" Argument (Impossibility of Apostasy)

The Canned Response:

The Calvinist argues that a person's spiritual status is fixed by God's decree. They claim that a truly "righteous" person (one of the Elect) cannot turn away. If a person appears to be righteous but turns to sin, they argue, "They were never truly righteous."

The Biblical Rebuttal:

God explicitly rejects this logic in the book of Ezekiel.

- **The Righteous Can Turn to Death:** In **Ezekiel 18:24**, God says: "*But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity... All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass... he shall die.*" God calls him "righteous" before he falls. He does not say "the fake righteous."
- **The Wicked Can Turn to Life:** In **Ezekiel 18:21**, God says: "*But if the wicked will turn from all his sins... he shall surely live.*"
- **The Verdict:** God judges a man based on where he stands *now*, not where he stood *yesterday*. The Calvinist doctrine requires that a righteous man can never have his righteousness "not mentioned." Ezekiel says explicitly that if he turns to iniquity, his righteousness is wiped out. You can change sides.

The Advanced Defense: The Tactic of Sensory Overload

If you press a knowledgeable Calvinist with the arguments above, they will eventually realize that their "canned responses" are not working. They will see that you are not buying the "Corpse" theory or the "Metaphor" defense.

At this point, they will shift tactics. They will move from **Defense** to **Overload**.

They will try to bury you under a mountain of Bible verses. They will fire off citations like a machine gun—Jeremiah 13, John 6, Romans 8, John 10—hoping to overwhelm you with the sheer volume of Scripture. Their goal is "Sensory Overload." They want you to panic, think, "There are too many verses to answer," and surrender to their system.

We accept the challenge.

We do not fear a pile of Scripture. We love the King James Bible. To us, a mountain of verses is not a threat; it is a gold mine. We know that the Bible does not contradict itself. If they throw fifty verses at us, we know that every single one of them—when rightly divided—will harmonize with the Truth.

Furthermore, you are not unarmed in this fight. Everyone reading this book has access to the **Sentinel Master Protocol**. You do not have to be intimidated by a seminary professor with a photographic memory. You can take their entire "overwhelming" list of Scriptures, load them into the Sentinel, and watch as the Protocol harmonizes them one by one.

They want to bury us in the Word? Let them try. We will simply dig our way out, verse by verse, until the Truth stands clear.

Here is how we handle their "Advanced" objections.

Objection 8: The "Slave to Desire" Argument (Moral Inability)

The Scholarly Objection:

When the basic arguments fail, the Calvinist will pivot. They will say, "Okay, we agree man has a mind and a will. He isn't a literal rock. But he is a Slave to his Desires. A lion has the ability to eat a salad (it has teeth), but it has no desire to eat it because of its nature. In the same way, a sinner could choose God if he wanted to, but his fallen nature makes him hate God. Therefore, he will never choose God unless God changes his nature first." They quote Jeremiah 13:23: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin... then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

The Biblical Rebuttal:

This argument proves exactly what we believe: Man cannot save himself. But it ignores the Power of the Gospel.

- **The Power Source:** We agree that a man in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8). That is why he needs the Gospel! Paul says the Gospel itself is *"the power of God unto salvation"* (Romans 1:16). The Calvinist thinks the sinner has to change his own desires *before* he can believe. The Bible teaches that the Word of God is *"quick, and powerful"* (Hebrews 4:12) and acts as the catalyst that frees the will to believe.
- **The Ethiopian's Cry:** Jeremiah 13 proves the Ethiopian cannot scrub his own skin white. It does *not* prove he cannot cry out for a bath. The Gospel isn't a command for the leper to heal himself; it's an offer from the Physician.
- **God Works the Will: Philippians 2:13** says, *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* God provides the initial influence (the "drawing") that enables the sinner to make a choice he couldn't make on his own.

Objection 9: The "Covenant of Redemption" Argument (Security)

The Scholarly Objection:

The Calvinist will argue that your security depends on a promise the Father made to the Son before time began. They claim that if even one person "given" to Jesus is lost, the Father has broken His promise. They quote John 6:39: "And this is the Father's will... that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

The Biblical Rebuttal:

They are inventing a "Secret Treaty" to override the clear warnings of Jesus Himself.

- **The Condition of "Given":** We must look at *who* the "given" ones are. Jesus defines them in **John 17:6**: *"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me... and they have kept thy word."* The "given" are those who keep the Word.

- **The Condition of Abiding:** You cannot use John 6 to erase **John 15:6:** *"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth..."* Jesus promised He would not lose anyone who stays in His hand. He never promised to hold a prisoner who insists on leaving.
- **The Judas Exception:** In **John 17:12**, Jesus says, *"Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition."* Judas was part of the group, yet he was lost. This proves that being "chosen" for a position (apostleship) does not guarantee eternal security if you choose to betray the Lord.

Objection 10: The "Means of Grace" Argument (The Warnings)

The Scholarly Objection:

The Calvinist admits the warnings about "falling away" and "blotting out" are terrifying. But they argue: "These warnings are the Means God uses to keep the Elect safe. When a saved person reads 'I will blot you out,' they get scared and repent. When a fake believer reads it, they ignore it. So, the warning is real, but it is impossible for an Elect person to actually fall."

The Biblical Rebuttal:

This turns God into a deceiver.

- **The Lie:** If it is *impossible* for me to fall, but God tells me "Beware lest you fall," then God is threatening me with a lie. He is using a false threat to keep me in line. The God of Truth does not govern His children with deception.
- **The Reality of the Fall:** **Galatians 5:4** says, *"Christ is become of no effect unto you... ye are fallen from grace."* Paul is not warning them about a hypothetical nightmare; he is telling them exactly what happens if they try to be justified by the law. You cannot fall from a place you never stood.
- **The Example of Israel:** In **1 Corinthians 10**, Paul lists the Israelites who died in the wilderness and says, *"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition."* If they fell, we can fall. That is the point of the warning.

Objection 11: The "Anthropomorphic" Argument (God Doesn't Change)

The Scholarly Objection:

The Calvinist argues that you are reading the Bible too literally ("wooden literalism"). They say: "When the Bible talks about God 'repenting,' 'forgetting,' or 'blotting out,' it is using human language (anthropomorphism) to describe how it feels to us. God is immutable (unchanging). He does not react to man. He does not edit His decrees. Therefore, 'blotting out' is a metaphor for losing blessings, not salvation." They quote Malachi 3:6: "For I am the LORD, I change not."

The Biblical Rebuttal:

They are confusing God's Character with His Actions.

- **God's Rule Never Changes:** God is immutable. His character never changes. But His specific rule is: *"If you sin, I will judge. If you repent, I will forgive."*
- **The Jeremiah Principle:** God explains exactly how He operates in **Jeremiah 18:7-8**: *"At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation... to destroy it; If that nation... turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."* God explicitly says He will change His course of action based on man's response. This isn't a metaphor; it's His stated policy.
- **The Blotting Out is Literal:** If "blotting out" is just a metaphor, then "writing in" is just a metaphor. You cannot have it both ways. If the promise of life is real, the threat of death is real. The God who does not change has unchangeably declared: *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"* (Ezekiel 18:20).

Objection 12: The "Perfect Nature" Argument (The Fruit Test)

The Scholarly Objection:

The institutional theologians claim that a true believer will inevitably possess a nature that stops sinning, or that they can reach a state of sinless perfection in this life.

- **The Calvinist** argues that God's sovereign decree guarantees the Elect will walk in holiness. They say, *"God's grace is irresistible; therefore, His work in us will produce obedience. A true Christian cannot continue in sin because God's power prevents it."*
- **The Seventh-day Adventist** goes further. They teach that in the last days, believers must achieve "Character Perfection." They claim that before the end, the saints will stand before a Holy God **without an Intercessor**, meaning they must reach a state of absolute sinlessness to survive.
- **The Wesleyan-Holiness Groups** (Methodists, Nazarenes, Salvation Army, etc.) teach "Entire Sanctification." They believe a Christian can reach a state in this life where the heart is purified from all original sin and they live in perfect love, essentially stopping all willful sin.
- **The Roman Catholic** teaches the doctrine of "Supererogation." They claim that "Canonized Saints" lived such perfect lives that they acquired *more* merit than they needed for their own salvation. This extra merit goes into a "Treasury" to help others. This requires a level of holiness that is actually *above* the standard of the Law.

The Biblical Rebuttal:

This argument collapses the moment you leave the theology book and look at real life. If the Calvinist is right (that God forces obedience), or if the others are right (that man can achieve perfection or surplus merit), then we should be able to find these people.

When you combine the Calvinists, the 23 million Adventists, the 80 million Wesleyans, and the **1.3 billion Roman Catholics**, you have a test group of nearly **1.5 billion people**. All of them claim that an "Angel-like" victory over sin is either guaranteed, achievable, or historically factual.

So, let us put them to the test.

- **The Lust Test:** Jesus said, *"Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart"* (Matthew 5:28). Can you find a single male from these groups—even a Pope or a "Saint"—who has the ability to look at the opposite sex and *never* have a lustful thought? Is there one man in these billions who is so holy that he is banking "extra merit" for the rest of us?
- **The Anger Test:** Jesus said, *"Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also"* (Matthew 5:39). Can you show me one "Perfectionist" who, when slapped in the face, humiliated, or slandered on the internet, *never* feels the flash of anger? Is there one who *never* wants to hit back? If they are "Entirely Sanctified," why do they still react like sinners?
- **The Anxiety Test:** Jesus commanded, *"Take no thought for your life"* (Matthew 6:25). Show me the believer who never worries. Show me the one who never stresses about money, health, or the future. If they are walking by a "Sovereign Decree" of holiness, where is the perfect peace?

The Verdict:

The theology breaks down in actual application. If you claim that God has given you an "Angel-like nature," or that you have achieved "Sinless Perfection," or that you are piling up "Treasury Merit," then you should live like an angel. But you don't.

You cannot find a single sinless person among the billions of them on earth. They still get angry. They still struggle with lust. They still worry. They still sin.

The Conclusion:

The fact that you cannot find a single "Sinless Saint" in these vast groups proves four things:

1. **To the Calvinist:** God has *not* turned you into a robot of righteousness. You still have a "Mixture" and must choose to walk in the Spirit.
2. **To the Adventist:** You are not ready to stand without an Intercessor. You need the blood of Jesus every single hour.

3. **To the Wesleyan:** You have not achieved "Entire Sanctification." Your old nature is not gone; it is waiting for you to let your guard down.
4. **To the Catholic:** There is no "Treasury of Merit" because there is no human with extra righteousness. Even the best saints were "unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:10) who needed every drop of grace just to save themselves.

The absence of humans with "Angel" natures on earth is the final proof that these doctrines are fantasies. We are saved by His blood, not our perfection or performance.

The Solution: Resting in Imputed Righteousness

So, if we are not angels, and if we cannot make ourselves perfect, how can we possibly be saved? If the best of us still struggle with anger, lust, and anxiety, are we all doomed?

This is where the Good News of the Gospel shines the brightest. The Bible does not tell us to *become* perfect to be saved; it tells us that we are saved by the perfection of Another.

This is the doctrine of **Imputed Righteousness**.

"Impute" is a legal term. It means to credit something to your account that you did not earn. Imagine you are in debt for a billion dollars. You are bankrupt. You cannot pay it. Then, a King walks in, pays the entire debt, and then transfers his own endless fortune into your bank account. The bank looks at your account and sees "Billions." They treat you as a billionaire, not because you earned it, but because it was credited (imputed) to you.

2 Corinthians 5:21 explains the Great Exchange: *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*

- **Jesus took our Sin:** On the cross, God treated Jesus as if He were you. He punished Jesus for your lust, your anger, and your doubt. Jesus didn't commit those sins, but they were *imputed* to Him.
- **We take His Righteousness:** In exchange, when you believe, God treats you as if you were Jesus. He credits Christ's perfect life—His perfect love, His perfect patience, His perfect obedience—to your account.

This means that when you are struggling—when you have that flash of anger or that moment of fear—God does not look at you and see a failure. He looks at you and sees the perfect record of His Son. You are "accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

We do not fight sin to *get* saved. We fight sin because we *are* saved. We strive to be holy because we love the One who made us holy. But our standing before God never rests on our performance; it rests entirely on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

The Calvinist wants you to look at your election. The Adventist wants you to look at your perfection. The Catholic wants you to look at your treasury.

The Bible tells you to look at the Cross.

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Philippians 3:9)

A Topical Index for the Berean Student.

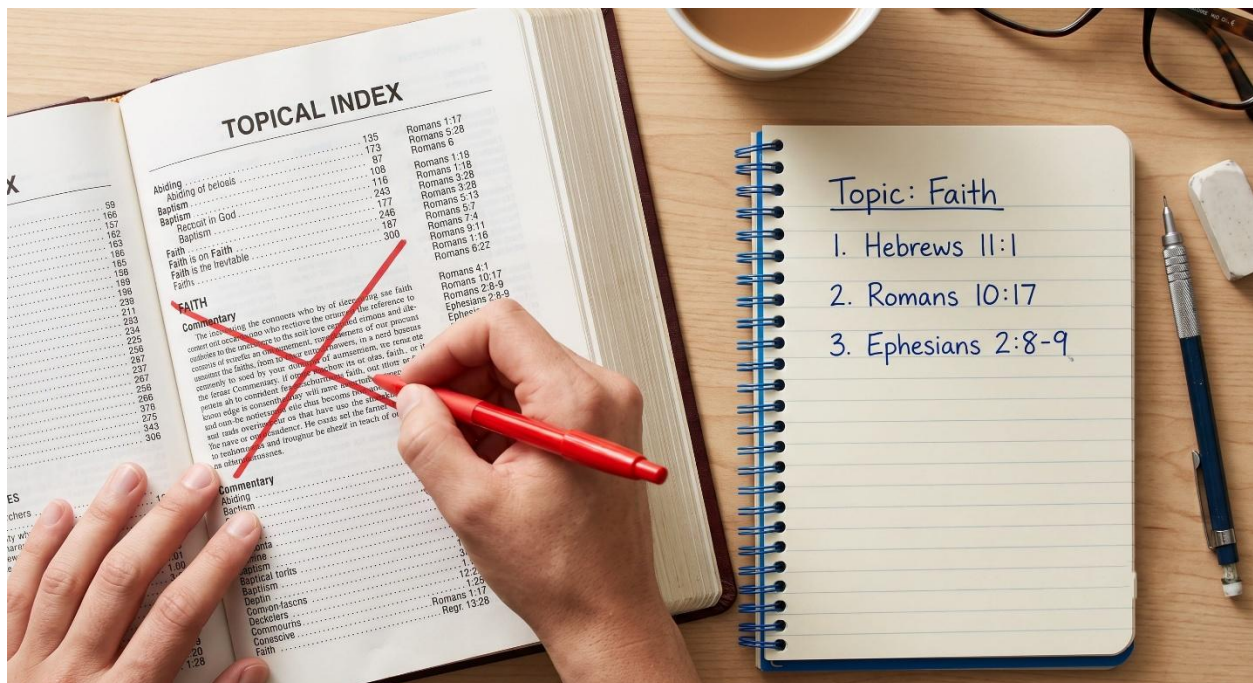
A Simple Guide to Topical Bible Study

The goal of this method is to empower you to understand the Bible for yourself, free from the influence of denominational doctrines, church traditions, or academic opinions. By letting the Bible interpret itself, you can arrive at a pure and consistent understanding of God's Word on any given topic. The process is simple and requires only a King James Bible and a willingness to diligently seek the truth.

Step 1: Gather All Scripture

The first step is to collect every verse in the King James Bible that pertains to your chosen topic. To do this effectively, you must begin with a clean mind, setting aside any preconceived ideas or church teachings you may have learned.

- **Choose a Topic:** Select the subject you wish to study (e.g, Faith, Repentance, Salvation).
- **Use Verse-Finding Tools:** Use public domain resources like *Nave's Topical Bible* or *Torrey's New Topical Textbook* for the sole purpose of locating verses. Do not read any accompanying commentary. Your goal is simply to compile a complete list of relevant scriptures.
- **Create Your List:** Write down every verse you find, from Genesis to Revelation. This exhaustive list is the raw material for your study.

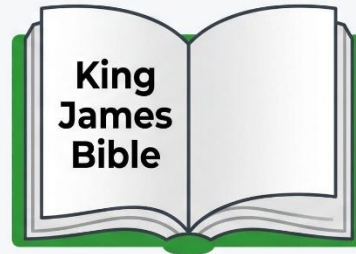


The “Source Exclusion” Chart

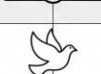
EXCLUDE: 
Church Interpretations

Catholic, Orthodox,
Lutheran, Anglican,
Wesleyan, Pentecostal,
Evangelical, Mormon,
Adventist,
Jehovah’s Witness

INCLUDE: 
Scripture Alone



Denominational Bias of Major Commentaries

Commentary / Author	Denominational Alignment	
John Gill’s Exposition		Particular Baptist (Strict Calvinist)
Matthew Henry’s Commentary		Presbyterian / Reformed (Calvinist)
Martin Luther’s Works		Lutheran
John Wesley’s Notes		Methodist / Wesleyan (Arminian)
Adam Clarke’s Commentary		Methodist / Wesleyan (Arminian)
Scofield Reference Notes		Dispensationalist / Baptist
Navarre Bible Notes		Roman Catholic
Orthodox Study Bible		Eastern Orthodox

 **WARNING:** Commentaries interpret the Bible through the pre-conceived lens of their specific church’s doctrines. They do not let the Bible interpret itself.

Step 2: Let Scripture Interpret Scripture

Once you have gathered all the verses, the next step is to harmonize them to find the consistent truth they collectively teach. The Bible is its own best interpreter.

- **Start with the Simple Verses:** Read through your list and identify the verses that are the most straightforward and easy to understand. These clear passages will form the foundation of your doctrine on the topic.
- **Harmonize with Complex Verses:** Use the foundational understanding you gained from the simple verses to shed light on the more difficult or seemingly ambiguous passages. A true biblical doctrine will not have any contradictions. Every complex verse must ultimately align with the clear and simple ones.
- **Seek Complete Harmony:** Continue this process until your understanding of the topic allows every single verse on your list to fit together in perfect harmony, without exception or contradiction.





CHURCH TRADITIONS

Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Evangelical, Mormon, Adventist, JW

Only 2 or 3 verses supporting a doctrine.



Incomplete / Selective Verses

PERSONAL TOPICAL STUDY

Nave's Topical Bible, Strong's Concordance, Treasury of Scripture Knowledge

☐ (1) Gen. 1:1	☐ (14) Jer. 29:11
☐ (2) Exod. 20:3	☐ (15) Matt. 5:3
☐ (3) Lev. 19:18	☐ (16) Mark 1:1
☐ (4) Num. 6:24	☐ (17) Luke 2:10
☐ (5) Deut. 6:4	☐ (18) John 3:16
☐ (6) Josh. 1:8	☐ (19) Acts 1:8
☐ (7) Judg. 2:10	☐ (20) Rom. 8:28
☐ (8) Ruth 1:16	☐ (21) 1 Cor. 13:4
☐ (9) 1 Sam. 16:7	☐ (22) Gal. 5:22
☐ (10) 2 Sam. 7:12	☐ (23) Eph. 2:8
☐ (11) 1 Kings 3:5	☐ (24) Phil. 4:13
☐ (12) 2 Kings 17:7	☐ (25) Col. 3:2
☐ (13) Isa. 40:8	☐ (26) Heb. 11:1
☐ (14) Jer. 29:11	☐ (27) Jas. 1:5
☐ (15) Matt. 5:3	☐ (28) 1 Pet. 2:9
☐ (16) Mark 1:1	☐ (29) 1 Jn. 4:8
☐ (17) Luke 2:10	☐ (30) Rev. 21:1
☐ (18) John 3:16	



Exhaustive / All Verses on the Topic

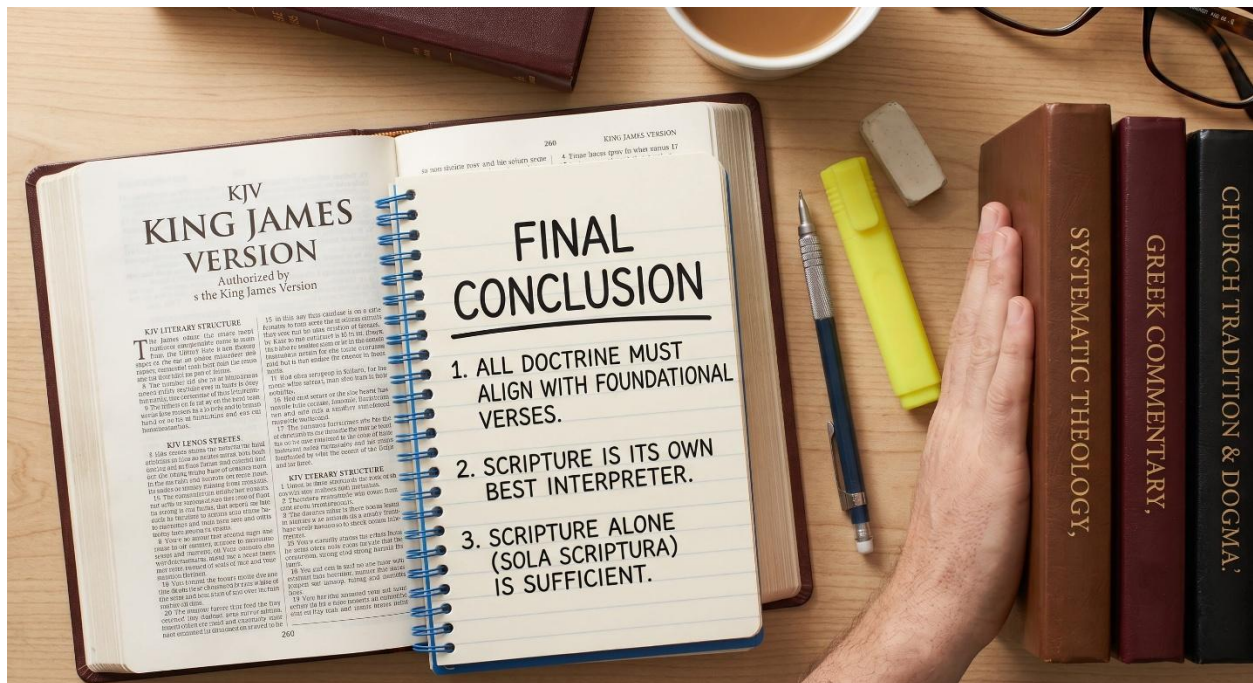
Step 3: Form Your Conclusion from Scripture Alone

The final step is to form your belief based entirely on the harmonized conclusion you reached in Step 2. This conclusion is not yours, nor is it from any pastor or theologian; it is the Bible's own teaching on the matter.

- **Believe the Harmonized Truth:** Accept the clear, consistent doctrine revealed by the entirety of Scripture on your topic.
- **Reject All External Authority:** Your conclusion must be based solely on the King James Bible. If it aligns with what a church teaches, let it be because the church is aligned with the Bible, not the other way around. Disregard any teaching, commentary, or tradition that contradicts the harmonized truth you have found.

By following this three-step method, you can build your faith on the solid rock of Scripture and be protected from the shifting winds of human doctrine.





Step 1: Gather All Scripture

 Extract verses from an index, ignoring/crossing out commentary.



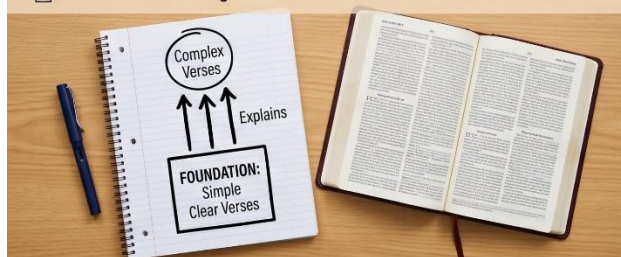
Step 2: Let Scripture Interpret Scripture (Categorize)

 Separate easy-to-understand verses from difficult ones.



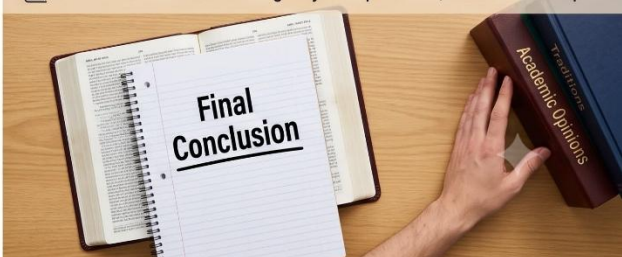
Step 3: Let Scripture Interpret Scripture (Harmonize)

 Build doctrine using clear verses as the foundation.



Step 4: Form Your Conclusion from Scripture Alone

 Arrive at final doctrine using only the open Bible, discard other inputs.



The Topical Bible Studies (KJV) Encyclopedia

We have forged a *daily weapon* for the watchman on the wall, a sharp sword to cut through the confusion of the age. Every day, a new study traces a **single thread of truth** from the ancient roots of Genesis to the final visions of Revelation, revealing the full, uncompromised counsel of God. There is no need for the dusty halls of a Bible college or a degree in Philosophy to master these depths; you can understand the Scriptures *better than a well-trained minister* without the burden of Greek or Hebrew. "The Topical Bible Studies (KJV) Encyclopedia" is a profound **2.5-year journey** through the King James Bible, designed to arm the believer with the pure Word of God. I have set the price of these ten volumes low enough that you can gather this entire armory at once, securing a lifetime of truth for the mere cost of a Bible dictionary.

The Discipline of Silence

Training your mind to become a true topical Bible student is a quiet discipline that *demand*s patience, moving you away from the quick satisfaction of a commentary or a video. It is a slow turning of the heart, learning to sit still with the text instead of instinctively reaching for an external voice to explain the mystery. **You must learn to wait** on the scripture itself, allowing the Holy Spirit to become your primary teacher in the silence of study. This process requires you to trust that the answer lies within the pages, not in the opinions of others.

The Architecture of Truth

The *Topical Bible Studies (KJV) Encyclopedia* mirrors a method honed over decades, a faithful path that begins by gathering every scattered verse on a subject into one place. You arrange these fragments carefully, starting with the **clearest, simplest truths** that anchor the soul, and only then moving toward the more difficult passages. By harmonizing the complex with the simple, the apparent contradictions fade away, leaving only a unified picture of truth. The *key phrase related to the topic* guides your eye, ensuring that the foundation is laid before the structure is built.

The Clarity of God's Voice

The ultimate goal is to **lean wholly on the Word of God**, stripping away the noisy clutter of outside influence to hear His voice alone. This ten-volume set stands as a testament that the Bible speaks in a plain, accessible language that *even a child can grasp* without fear or confusion. The chaos often found in Christendom is not born of God, but is merely the dust kicked up by man-made systems that obscure the simple light of scripture. When you remove the filters of tradition, the truth remains **bold and undeniable**.

This is a tool for the house church. Whether you are an elder preparing to feed the flock or a believer seeking meat for your own soul, these studies are built for you. You will not find human commentary or private interpretation here. We simply assemble the witnesses—verse by verse—so that you can see with your own eyes how the Bible interprets itself. You do not need a scholar to tell you what the text means; you only need to read it.

How to Access the Library:

- [The Topical Bible Studies \(KJV\) Encyclopedia](#) (on Amazon)

Recommended Foundational Topical Bible Study Topics

Laying before you are the **foundational topics** designed to sharpen your skills in the Topical Bible Study method. Once you truly *master* this technique, the need for my encyclopedia simply fades away, leaving you with the raw power of discovery. Take a moment to review the three steps, then immerse yourself fully in the process; you will find that each subject can be beautifully **harmonized** within a quiet two-hour span. To begin your studies, you are encouraged to conduct a topical Bible study on each of the following 28 foundational doctrines.

1. Defining the Gospel

The Gospel is the message that Christ's death, burial, and resurrection fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, as recorded by eyewitnesses in the Gospels. Salvation is received by faith in this historical event, not by adherence to the Mosaic Law.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-47, John 20:31, Acts 2:22-24, Acts 2:32, Acts 2:36-39, Acts 10:36-43, Acts 13:26-39, Romans 1:1-4, Romans 1:16, Romans 4:24-25, Romans 10:14-17, 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, Galatians 1:6-9, 2 Timothy 2:8, 2 Timothy 3:15.

2. Defining the Essentials for Salvation

Salvation requires faith in Jesus Christ, repentance from sin, baptism by water and the Spirit, and a changed life that bears fruit. It is a gift of God's grace, with baptism being a necessary step for receiving the Holy Spirit.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Matthew 3:8, Matthew 7:16-21, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:16, Luke 8:15, Luke 13:3-5, John 3:5-6, John 3:16, John 3:36, John 5:24, John 15:1-8, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 16:31, Acts 17:30, Acts 22:16, Romans 2:6-7, Romans 6:3-4, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:8-9, Ephesians 5:9, Philippians 1:11, Colossians 1:10, Titus 3:5-7, Hebrews 5:9, James 2:14-26, 2 Peter 3:9.

3. Defining Faith

Faith is a multifaceted concept, being simultaneously a gift from God, a divine command, and the evidence of a transformed life. Defined as the assurance of things hoped for, its object is God, Christ, and His promises revealed in Scripture. Faith is initiated by the Holy Spirit through the hearing of God's Word and is the necessary means by which believers receive forgiveness, justification, salvation, and sanctification.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Numbers 13:30, 2 Chronicles 20:20, Job 19:25, Psalm 27:13, Psalm 116:10, Daniel 3:17, Daniel 6:10-23, Matthew 11:22, Matthew 16:16, Matthew 17:20, Matthew 21:21-22, Mark 1:15, Mark 9:23, Mark 16:16, Luke 7:50, Luke 17:5-6, Luke 24:47, John 1:12, John 1:49, John 3:15, John 4:39, John 5:46, John 6:29, John 6:40-47, John 10:25-27, John 11:27, John 12:36-37, John 12:46, John 14:1, John 16:30, John 17:20, John 20:28-31, Acts 6:5-7, Acts 8:12-13, Acts 8:21, Acts 8:37, Acts 10:43, Acts 11:21-24, Acts 13:12-39, Acts 14:22, Acts 15:9, Acts 16:31-34, Acts 19:9, Acts 20:21, Acts 24:14, Acts 26:18-27, Romans 1:8-17, Romans 3:21-22, Romans 3:25-28, Romans 4:12-24, Romans 5:1-2, Romans 10:3-4, Romans 10:14-17, Romans 11:20, Romans 12:3, Romans 14:22-23, Romans 15:13, 1 Corinthians 2:5, 1 Corinthians 3:5, 1 Corinthians 12:9, 1 Corinthians 16:13, 2 Corinthians 1:24, 2 Corinthians 4:13, 2 Corinthians 5:7, 2 Corinthians 8:7, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 2:16-20, Galatians 3:11-14, Galatians 3:22-26, Galatians 5:6, Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 2:8, Ephesians 3:12-17, Ephesians 6:16-23, Philippians 1:29, Colossians 1:4-23, 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:8, 2 Thessalonians 3:2, 1 Timothy 1:4-5, 1 Timothy 1:18-19, 1 Timothy 4:10, 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Timothy 1:5-12, 2 Timothy 3:15, 2 Timothy 4:7, Hebrews 4:2-3, Hebrews 6:12, Hebrews 10:22, Hebrews 11:1-13, Hebrews 11:17-39, Hebrews 12:2, James 1:3-6, James 2:17-26, 1 Peter 1:5-8, 1 Peter 2:6-7, 1 Peter 5:9, 2 Peter 1:1, 1 John 3:23, 1 John 5:1-5, Jude 1:20, Philemon 1:5.

4. Defining Repentance

Repentance is a fundamental and transformative change of mind and heart, involving a conscious decision to turn away from sin and toward God. It is an internal transformation enabled by the Holy Spirit received at baptism, not an act of penance to atone for sin. Repentance is a necessary command from God, a gift from Christ, and is essential for the pardon of sin and for salvation.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Genesis 6:3, Leviticus 26:40, Judges 10:15-16, 1 Samuel 15:24-30, 2 Samuel 12:13, 1 Kings 8:33-47, 1 Kings 21:27-29, 2 Chronicles 6:26, 2 Chronicles 7:14, 2 Chronicles 33:12-13, Ezra 9:6-15, Job 42:6, Psalm 95:7-8, Proverbs 28:13, Isaiah 1:16-17, Isaiah 45:22, Jeremiah 8:6, Jeremiah 31:19, Ezekiel 14:6, Ezekiel 16:61-63, Ezekiel 18:30-32, Zechariah 12:10, Matthew 3:2, Matthew 4:17, Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 9:13, Matthew 11:20-24, Matthew 12:41, Matthew 21:29-32, Matthew 27:3-5, Mark 1:15, Mark 6:12, Luke 13:3-5, Luke 15:7-10, Luke 15:17-21, Luke 16:30-31, Luke 18:13, Luke 19:8, Luke 23:40-41, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 3:19, Acts 5:31, Acts 8:22, Acts 11:18, Acts 14:15, Acts 17:30, Acts 19:18, Acts 20:21, Acts 26:20, Romans 2:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 2 Corinthians 7:9-11, Colossians 3:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 2 Timothy 2:25, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 4:9-10, 1 Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 2:5-21, Revelation 3:3-19, Revelation 9:20, Revelation 16:9.

5. Defining "Being Born of Water and the Spirit"

Being "born of water and the Spirit," as stated in John 3:5, is a literal and non-negotiable requirement for entering God's Kingdom. It is a single, unified event where "water" refers to physical water baptism and "Spirit" refers to the reception of the Holy Spirit. This event, which occurs at the time of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, is an act of obedient faith and is inseparable from justification and sanctification.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Deuteronomy 30:6, Nehemiah 9:20, Psalm 68:18, Isaiah 32:15, Isaiah 43:6-7, Isaiah 59:21, Jeremiah 24:7, Ezekiel 11:19, Ezekiel 36:26, Ezekiel 39:29, Haggai 2:5, John 1:13, John 3:3-8, John 3:34, John 6:27, John 7:38-39, John 14:16, John 20:22, Acts 2:38-39, Acts 5:32, Acts 10:44, Acts 11:17, Acts 15:8, Romans 2:29, Romans 6:4-6, Romans 7:6-22, Romans 8:7-8, Romans 8:16-17, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 4:15, 1 Corinthians 12:13, 2 Corinthians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Corinthians 4:16, 2 Corinthians 5:5-17, Galatians 3:14, Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 1:16-17, Ephesians 2:1-10, Ephesians 4:24-30, Colossians 2:11, Colossians 3:10, Titus 3:5-6, James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:3-23, 1 Peter 2:2, 1 Peter 3:20-21, 1 Peter 4:14, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 2:29, 1 John 3:2-9, 1 John 3:24, 1 John 4:7-13, 1 John 5:1-18, Revelation 7:3, Revelation 9:4.

6. Defining Baptism

Baptism is a direct commandment from Christ, essential for salvation, and serves as an act of obedient faith. It requires prior repentance and belief in the Gospel. The proper mode is immersion in "much water" for the remission of sins and the reception of the Holy Ghost. It symbolizes the believer's union with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, uniting them to His body, the church, and replacing circumcision as the seal of the New Covenant.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Genesis 3:21, Job 29:14, Isaiah 61:10, Matthew 3:5-15, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 22:11-14, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:16, Luke 3:21, John 1:33, John 3:3-6, John 3:22-23, John 4:1-2, John 14:23-24, Acts 1:5, Acts 2:38-41, Acts 8:12-39, Acts 9:18, Acts 10:47-48, Acts 11:16-18, Acts 13:24, Acts 16:15-34, Acts 18:8, Acts 19:3-5, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:1-4, Romans 7:1-4, 1 Corinthians 1:13-17, 1 Corinthians 10:2, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27-28, Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 4:5-30, Ephesians 5:26, Colossians 2:11-13, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Titus 3:5-7, 1 Peter 3:20-21, 1 Peter 4:17.

7. Defining Forgiveness of Sins

The forgiveness of sins is achieved solely through faith in Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross; it cannot be earned. A central aspect of this forgiveness is that God "will not impute sin" to believers, meaning He does not hold or record their sins against them. For believers, past sins are forgiven, and future sins are not recorded, providing comprehensive coverage under Christ's atonement. This act is rooted in God's nature as love, which keeps no record of wrongs.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Exodus 34:6-7, Leviticus 16:30, Nehemiah 9:17, Job 25:4, Psalm 32:1, Psalm 51:1-13, Psalm 65:3, Psalm 86:5-16, Psalm 103:2-12, Psalm 130:3, Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 33:24, Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 44:22, Isaiah 53:10-12, Isaiah 54:9-10, Isaiah 55:1-11, Jeremiah 31:34, Jeremiah 33:8, Jeremiah 50:20, Daniel 9:9, Jonah 4:2, Micah 7:18-19, Zechariah 13:1, Matthew 1:21, Luke 1:77, Luke 24:47, Acts 3:19, Acts 10:43, Acts 13:38-39, Romans 4:4-8, Romans 5:11-20, Romans 11:26-27, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Ephesians 1:6-8, Ephesians 2:4-9, Colossians 1:14, Colossians 2:13-14, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 8:12, Hebrews 9:12-14, Hebrews 10:17, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 Peter 3:18, 1 John 1:7-9, 1 John 2:12, 1 John 4:7-8, Revelation 1:5, Revelation 7:14, Philemon 1:18-19.

8. Defining Justification

Justification is a legal declaration by God in which He pronounces a sinner righteous. This declaration is not based on the individual's merit or works but is granted solely through faith in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is a free gift of God's grace, grounded in Christ's atoning blood and resurrection, and is received by faith alone, apart from the deeds of the Law.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Genesis 15:6, Exodus 23:7, Leviticus 18:5, Job 9:2-3, Job 25:4, Psalm 32:1-2, Psalm 130:3, Psalm 143:2, Isaiah 45:25, Isaiah 50:8, Isaiah 53:11, Isaiah 54:17, Isaiah 61:10, Jeremiah 23:6, Habakkuk 2:4, Zechariah 3:4-5, Luke 18:14, John 5:24, Acts 13:39, Acts 15:1-29, Romans 1:17, Romans 2:13, Romans 3:20-31, Romans 4:2-16, Romans 4:25, Romans 5:1-21, Romans 8:3-34, Romans 9:31-32, Romans 10:5, Romans 11:6, 1 Corinthians 1:29-31, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 1 Corinthians 9:21, 1 Corinthians 15:17, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 2:14-21, Galatians 3:11, Galatians 5:4, Philippians 3:8-9, Titus 3:7, James 2:10.

9. Defining Sanctification

Sanctification is a completed, one-time event that occurs at the moment of salvation through faith in Christ's singular, all-sufficient sacrifice. It is not a lifelong process of works or moral improvement. Scripture affirms in the present tense that believers "are sanctified" and have been "perfected for ever," granting them a permanent state of holiness and immediate access to God. This finished work of Christ is distinct from the ongoing process of "bearing fruit."

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Exodus 13:2, Exodus 19:10-14, Exodus 29:37, Exodus 31:13, Exodus 40:9-11, Leviticus 8:10-12, Leviticus 20:7-8, Leviticus 21:8, Leviticus 27:14-16, Numbers 7:1, Deuteronomy 5:12, Joshua 7:13, 1 Samuel 16:5, 1 Chronicles 15:12-14, 2 Chronicles 5:11, 2 Chronicles 7:16, 2 Chronicles 29:5-34, 2 Chronicles 30:8-17, 2 Chronicles 31:6, Nehemiah 13:22, Isaiah 5:16, Isaiah 13:3, Jeremiah 1:5, Ezekiel 20:12, Ezekiel 36:23, Ezekiel 37:28, Joel 1:14, John 10:36, John 17:17-19, Acts 20:32, Acts 26:18, Romans 15:16, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 1 Corinthians 7:14, Ephesians 5:26, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Timothy 4:5, 2 Timothy 2:21, Hebrews 2:11, Hebrews 9:13, Hebrews 10:10-14, Hebrews 10:29, Hebrews 13:12, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 3:15, Jude 1:1, Revelation 22:11.

10. Defining Imputed Righteousness and Infused Righteousness

Imputed righteousness is the core of justification, where the perfect, external righteousness of Christ is legally credited to a believer's account solely through faith. This is a one-time forensic declaration by God. In contrast, infused righteousness is the flawed concept of a lifelong process where grace is imparted into a believer, who then cooperates through works and sacraments to become internally righteous over time. The former provides full assurance based on Christ's finished work, while the latter undermines grace and leads to uncertainty.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Genesis 15:6, Leviticus 7:18, Leviticus 17:4, Numbers 18:27, Psalm 32:2, Psalm 106:31, Isaiah 64:6, Romans 2:26, Romans 4:3-24, Romans 5:13-19, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, Galatians 3:6, Philippians 3:9, James 2:23.

11. Defining "Bearing Fruit"

Bearing fruit is the visible, ongoing evidence of a living faith, but it must not be confused with a ledger of flawless moral performance. Because the flesh remains corrupt, the true fruit of a Christian is manifested in the *Daily Full Circle Walk*. Believers are commanded to strive for obedience out of absolute duty, yet when they inevitably fail, the indwelling Holy Spirit produces the fruit of *godly sorrow*. This sorrow works a *repentance to salvation*, driving the believer back to the cross. The good tree is known by its faith, openly confessing complete dependence upon the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, while the corrupt tree boasts of its own *wonderful works*. This daily cycle of striving, failing, sorrow, and returning to Christ is distinct from sanctification, which is a completed, one-time act of being made holy by faith. Earthly obedience is never the root of justification; rather, *fruits meet for repentance* are the natural, broken heartbeat of a soul forever sealed by the Spirit.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Psalm 1:3, Psalm 92:14, Proverbs 11:30, Proverbs 12:14, Song of Solomon 2:3, Isaiah 27:6, Matthew 3:8-10, Matthew 7:16-20, Matthew 12:33, Matthew 13:23, Mark 4:20, Luke 3:8, Luke 6:43-44, Luke 8:15, Luke 13:9, John 4:36, John 12:24, John 15:1-16, Romans 1:13, Romans 6:21-22, Romans 7:4-5, 2 Corinthians 9:10, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:9, Philippians 1:11, Philippians 4:17, Colossians 1:6-10, Hebrews 12:11, Hebrews 13:15, James 3:17-18.

12. Defining the "Commandments" of Christ and the Apostles

The commandments for a Christian are the teachings of Christ and the Apostles as recorded in the New Testament. These are not suggestions but are the authoritative commands of the Lord that provide all necessary moral guidance. This new covenant of grace, centered on Christ's imputed righteousness, replaces the Old Covenant's Law of Moses, including the Ten Commandments. While Christians strive to obey Christ's commands, they are justified by grace through faith, not by adherence to the old law.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Genesis 26:5, Exodus 15:26, Exodus 16:28, Leviticus 22:31, Leviticus 26:3, Deuteronomy 4:2, Deuteronomy 5:10-29, Deuteronomy 6:1-25, Deuteronomy 7:9-11, Deuteronomy 8:1-6, Deuteronomy 10:13, Deuteronomy 11:1-27, Deuteronomy 13:4, Deuteronomy 15:5, Deuteronomy 26:17-18, Deuteronomy 27:1, Deuteronomy 28:1-9, Deuteronomy 30:8-16, Joshua 1:7, Joshua 22:5, 1 Kings 2:3, 1 Kings 3:14, 1 Kings 6:12, 1 Kings 8:61, 1 Kings 9:6, 1 Kings 11:38, Nehemiah 1:9, Nehemiah 9:13-14, Psalm 78:7, Psalm 89:31, Psalm 119:10-166, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Matthew 5:19, Matthew 19:17, Matthew 22:36-40, Matthew 28:20, Mark 12:29-31, Luke 1:6, John 12:50, John 13:34, John 14:15-31, John 15:10-14, Romans 16:26, 1 Corinthians 7:19, 1 Corinthians 14:37, 1 Timothy 6:14, Titus 1:3, 1 John 2:3-4, 1 John 3:22-24, 1 John 4:21, 1 John 5:2-3, 2 John 1:6, Revelation 12:17, Revelation 14:12, Revelation 22:14.

13. Defining The Church: The First Century House Church Model

House churches are the only model for church gatherings found in the New Testament. They are small, intimate communities that meet in homes, characterized by shared participation, a central

focus on reading and discussing the Bible, and practicing hospitality through shared meals ("love feasts"). Leadership is shared, not centered on a single pastor, and financial collections are for the needy, not for buildings or salaries. This model contrasts with the hierarchical and commercialized nature of many modern denominational structures.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Acts 2:46-47, Acts 5:42, Acts 8:3, Acts 12:12, Acts 16:40, Acts 20:20, Acts 28:30-31, Romans 16:5-15, 1 Corinthians 1:11-13, 1 Corinthians 3:3-6, 1 Corinthians 4:6, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, 1 Timothy 3:5-15, Titus 1:5-9, Philemon 1:2.

14. Defining the Communion, or the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a memorial feast to remember the finished, one-time sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It should be practiced as a "love feast"—a full, shared meal—within a house church, fostering fellowship and unity. This contrasts with the ritualistic token of a small wafer and sip of juice common in institutional churches. It is a remembrance and does not impart grace or forgive sin. The doctrine of Transubstantiation is rejected as it contradicts the nature of the supper as a memorial of a once-for-all sacrifice.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, Luke 24:30, John 6:47-58, Acts 2:42-46, Acts 20:7-11, Acts 27:35, 1 Corinthians 5:8, 1 Corinthians 10:16-21, 1 Corinthians 11:20-34.

15. Defining Financial Offerings

In the biblical house church model, financial offerings are free-will collections intended exclusively for the support of the poor, widows, orphans, and others in desperate need within the community. These funds are for charitable "good works," not for church buildings, mortgages, or salaries for local elders or pastors, who are expected to work and support their own families. The Old Testament tithe is not a binding requirement for New Testament Christians.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Ezra 2:69, Nehemiah 7:70, Malachi 3:10, Mark 12:41, Luke 21:1, John 8:20, Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32-37, Acts 11:29, Romans 15:26, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians 8:1-24, 2 Corinthians 9:1-15, Galatians 2:10, Ephesians 4:28, 1 Timothy 5:16, Hebrews 13:16, 3 John 1:5-8.

16. Bible Study: Topical Bible Study Method vs. Expository Teaching

Topical Bible study is a simple and accessible method of direct engagement with Scripture, free from the interpretation of pastors or academic institutions. It involves choosing a topic, gathering all relevant verses from the King James Bible using tools like Nave's Topical Bible, identifying key phrases, and comparing verses to let Scripture interpret Scripture. This independent approach empowers individuals to find answers for themselves, avoid doctrinal error, and take responsibility for their own spiritual understanding.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Deuteronomy 17:19, Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2, Psalm 119:11-97, Proverbs 2:1-5, Matthew 13:52, Matthew 23:8-10, Luke 24:27-45, John 5:39, Acts 17:11, Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12, 2 Peter 1:19-20, Revelation 1:3.

17. Defining False Prophets

False prophets are teachers who claim to speak for God but are not sent by Him. They teach false doctrines that contradict Scripture, often motivated by personal gain. Characteristically, they are eloquent and persuasive, twisting Scripture to offer a false sense of peace and security, thereby encouraging people to continue in sin. True discernment comes not from trusting credentials or popularity, but from testing every teaching against the Bible and examining the teacher's life for fruits of genuine repentance and obedience.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Deuteronomy 13:1-3, Deuteronomy 18:20-22, Isaiah 8:20, Jeremiah 5:31, Jeremiah 14:14, Jeremiah 23:16-32, Jeremiah 28:15, Jeremiah 29:8-9, Ezekiel 13:2-10, Ezekiel 22:28, Micah 3:5-11, Zechariah 13:3, Matthew 7:15-20, Matthew 24:11-24, Mark 13:22, Luke 6:26, Acts 20:29-30, Romans 16:18, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Galatians 1:8, Colossians 2:8, 2 Peter 2:1-3, 1 John 4:1, Jude 1:4.

18. Defining Heresy and Heretics

Heresy is any doctrine that deviates from the foundational truths established by Christ and the Apostles in the New Testament before 70 AD. Heretics are those who promote such beliefs. There are no "secondary doctrines"; any teaching that contradicts Scripture is a dangerous "doctrine of devils." Truth must be determined by the Bible alone, rejecting the traditions of men, Church Fathers, or councils as authoritative.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Jeremiah 17:5, Matthew 15:9, Acts 20:30, Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 11:19, Galatians 1:8-9, Galatians 5:20, Colossians 2:8, Colossians 2:22, 1 Timothy 1:3, 1 Timothy 4:1-7, 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 1 Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 2:16-18, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, Titus 1:14, Titus 3:9-11, Hebrews 13:9, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 2:18-19, 2 John 1:9-10, Jude 1:4.

19. How to Deal With Heresy and Heretics

Believers must deal with heresy by first identifying it through rigorous testing against Scripture. Once a teaching is confirmed as false, the Bible commands believers to mark and avoid those who cause divisions contrary to sound doctrine. This involves not listening to them, not receiving them into one's home or church, and not offering them support. The goal is to earnestly contend for the faith and refute their errors, while avoiding endless, unprofitable debates.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Deuteronomy 13:3, Isaiah 8:20, Jeremiah 23:16, Jeremiah 27:9-16, Matthew 7:15, Matthew 18:17, Romans 16:17-18, 1 Corinthians 5:11, 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, 2 Corinthians 11:13, Ephesians 5:11, 1 Timothy 1:3-4, 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 1

Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 2:16, 2 Timothy 3:5-8, Titus 1:10-14, Titus 3:9-11, 1 John 4:1, 2 John 1:10-11, Jude 1:3.

20. Defining Death

Death is a state of unconscious "sleep" in the grave, not an immediate transition to heaven or hell. The dead are unaware of the passage of time and have no knowledge, thoughts, or feelings. The concept of an inherently "immortal soul" that lives on after death is rejected as a lie originated by the devil. Humans are mortal; only God is immortal. The "spirit" that returns to God at death is the "breath of life," not a conscious entity. The dead, including righteous figures like King David, remain in their graves awaiting the resurrection. The hope for the believer is the future resurrection, when they will receive an immortal, "angel-like" body.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Genesis 2:7, Genesis 3:4, Genesis 25:8, Exodus 7:11, Leviticus 20:27, 1 Samuel 28:3-25, 1 Kings 2:10, 1 Kings 11:21-43, 1 Kings 14:20-31, 1 Kings 15:8-24, 1 Kings 16:6-28, 1 Kings 22:40-50, 2 Kings 8:24, 2 Kings 10:35, 2 Kings 13:9-13, 2 Kings 14:16-29, 2 Kings 15:7-38, 2 Kings 16:20, 2 Kings 20:1-21, 2 Kings 21:18, 2 Kings 24:6, Job 4:17, Job 14:1-21, Job 17:13, Job 27:3, Psalm 104:29, Psalm 115:17, Psalm 146:4, Ecclesiastes 9:5-10, Ecclesiastes 12:7, Isaiah 8:20, Ezekiel 18:20, Daniel 2:2, Matthew 9:24-25, Matthew 13:43, Matthew 22:30, Matthew 24:23-24, Mark 5:39-42, Mark 12:25, Luke 8:49-56, Luke 20:35-36, John 5:28-29, John 11:11-44, John 20:17, Acts 2:29-34, Acts 5:2-9, Acts 16:16-18, Acts 17:11, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 1 Corinthians 15:50-55, 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, 2 Corinthians 11:14, Philippians 1:21-24, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Timothy 6:15-16, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Hebrews 9:27, James 2:26, 2 Peter 3:10, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 12:9, Revelation 13:13-14, Revelation 16:3-14, Revelation 21:4, Revelation 22:12.

21. Defining the Second Coming

The Second Coming of Christ will not be a secret event but a visible, global phenomenon that "every eye shall see." Its timing is unknown and will be sudden, like a thief in the night. At His return, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the living righteous, they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Simultaneously, the wicked will be slain by the "brightness of his coming." The earth will then be left desolate and uninhabited during the thousand-year Millennium, as the saints will be with Christ in heaven.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Job 19:25-26, Psalm 50:3-4, Song of Solomon 2:8-10, Isaiah 11:3-4, Isaiah 24:23, Isaiah 34:2-4, Jeremiah 13:12-15, Jeremiah 25:30-33, Daniel 7:13-14, Daniel 7:27, Matthew 13:20, Matthew 16:27, Matthew 24:3-51, Matthew 25:1-46, Matthew 26:64, Mark 4:16, Mark 8:38, Mark 13:32-37, Luke 8:13, Luke 12:36-40, Luke 17:22-37, Luke 19:12-15, Luke 21:36, John 11:23-25, John 14:1-3, Acts 1:9-11, Acts 3:19-21, Romans 6:9-10, Romans 8:21, Romans 13:12, 1 Corinthians 1:7-8, 1 Corinthians 4:5, 1 Corinthians 15:25-26, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 3:20-21, Philippians 4:5, Colossians 3:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 3:13, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:5, 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 Timothy 6:14, 2 Timothy 2:12, 2 Timothy 4:8, 2 Timothy 4:18, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 9:28, James 5:7-8, 1 Peter 1:5-13, 1 Peter 4:7, 1 Peter 5:4, 2 Peter 3:3-4, 2 Peter 3:10-12, 1 John

2:28, 1 John 3:2, 1 John 4:17, Jude 1:14, Jude 1:24, Revelation 1:7, Revelation 5:10, Revelation 6:12-17, Revelation 11:15, Revelation 16:12-21, Revelation 18:1-5, Revelation 19:15-21, Revelation 20:5-6, Revelation 22:5, Revelation 22:20.

22. Defining Daniel's 70th Week

The prophecy of Daniel's 70th week was completely fulfilled historically and is not a future seven-year tribulation. This final "week" corresponds to the seven-year Jewish-Roman War from 66 AD to 73 AD. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the permanent cessation of sacrifices in 70 AD occurred "in the midst of the week." The war's conclusion in 73 AD marked the end of the Old Covenant system and the beginning of the Church Age.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Deuteronomy 28:52-57, Daniel 9:24-27, Matthew 24:1-34, Mark 13:1-30, Luke 19:43-44, Luke 21:20-32, John 4:21-24.

23. Defining the Millennium or 1000 Years

The Millennium is a literal 1,000-year period that begins at the Second Coming of Christ. During this time, the resurrected and translated saints reign with Christ in heaven. Meanwhile, the earth remains desolate and empty of human life, serving as the "bottomless pit" where Satan is bound. The wicked remain dead in their graves until the second resurrection for judgment at the end of the 1,000 years.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Isaiah 11:4-9, Isaiah 13:9, Isaiah 24:1-22, Jeremiah 4:23-28, Jeremiah 25:33, John 5:28-29, John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, Revelation 1:7, Revelation 6:12-14, Revelation 16:18-21, Revelation 20:1-10, Revelation 21:2-3, Revelation 22:11-12.

24. Defining the Book of Life, Election, and Predestination

Every person's name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life from the foundation of the world, as God desires all to be saved. However, salvation is conditional, and a name can be blotted out through unrepentant sin and unbelief. Predestination refers to God's plan for believers to be adopted and conformed to Christ's image, not a pre-selection of certain individuals for salvation and others for damnation. Election is based on God's foreknowledge of who would respond in faith.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, Psalm 139:16, Isaiah 4:3, Ezekiel 9:4, Daniel 12:1, Malachi 3:16, Matthew 22:14, Luke 10:20, John 1:12, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:29-33, Romans 9:11-24, Romans 11:5-7, Ephesians 1:4-11, Philippians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 2 Timothy 2:19, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:14, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:12-15, Revelation 21:27, Revelation 22:19.

25. Defining Sins that Lead to Being Outside of the City of God

The New Testament provides specific lists of sins that, if practiced without repentance, will result in exclusion from the City of God on Judgment Day. These include idolatry, sexual immorality (fornication, adultery, homosexuality), theft, greed, drunkenness, witchcraft, hatred, strife, heresy, envy, murder, lying, and cowardice. While every sin is forgivable through repentance and faith in the Gospel, those who die in unrepentant sin will not inherit God's Kingdom.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Romans 1:28-32, 1 Corinthians 5:11, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 2:2-3, Ephesians 5:3-6, Colossians 3:5-9, 1 Timothy 1:9-10, 2 Timothy 3:2-5, Titus 3:3, 1 Peter 4:3, Revelation 9:21, Revelation 21:8, Revelation 22:15.

26. Defining How Books in Heaven Are Used on Judgment Day

The final accounting of Judgment Day operates strictly on a two-book model, designed to affirm imputed righteousness rather than human performance. The Lamb's Book of Life contains the names of all humanity, written from the foundation of the world, though names may be blotted out through unrepentant sin or idolatry. For the believer, this book holds the perfect, imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, serving as their only acceptable evidence before the throne. There is no ledger of good deeds for the saint; their own works are rejected as *filthy rags*. Conversely, the books of deeds record the infractions of those who rely on their own self-righteousness. So long as the believer remains in Christ, His intercession upon the Throne of Grace shields them entirely from the books of deeds, ensuring there is *no condemnation*.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Exodus 32:32-33, Nehemiah 13:14, Psalm 56:8, Psalm 69:28, Ecclesiastes 12:14, Daniel 7:10, Daniel 12:1, Ezekiel 3:20-21, Ezekiel 14:14-20, Ezekiel 18:20-26, Ezekiel 33:10-20, Malachi 3:16, Matthew 12:36, Luke 10:20, Romans 2:16, Romans 14:12, 1 Corinthians 4:5, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Philippians 4:3, Hebrews 4:13, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:12-15, Revelation 21:27.

27. Defining Hell and the Lake of Fire

The biblical term "hell" (Sheol) refers to the grave—the state of unconscious death. The concept of an eternally burning place of conscious torment is a pagan idea. The Lake of Fire is a future, finite event, also called the "second death," where the wicked are utterly destroyed and cease to exist, a view known as annihilationism. Phrases like "everlasting punishment" refer to the permanent result of destruction, not an unending process of torment.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Genesis 1:5-31, Numbers 11:2, Deuteronomy 32:22, 1 Samuel 1:22, 2 Samuel 19:4, 2 Kings 22:17, 2 Chronicles 34:25, Job 21:30, Psalm 9:17, Proverbs 16:4, Isaiah 34:10, Isaiah 43:17, Isaiah 47:12-15, Isaiah 66:24, Jeremiah 7:20, Jeremiah 17:27, Ezekiel 20:47-48, Zephaniah 1:14, Malachi 4:1-3, Matthew 5:22, Matthew 10:28, Matthew 25:46, Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 9:42-48, Mark 14:3-13, Luke 7:36-50, Luke 10:38-42, Luke 12:46-48, Luke 16:23-31, John 5:29, John 11:1-44, John 12:1-11, Romans 2:5, Romans 9:22, 1 Peter 2:8, 2 Peter 2:4-9, 2 Peter 3:7-11, Jude 1:6-7, Revelation 6:17, Revelation 14:10-11, Revelation 16:14, Revelation 20:5-15..

28. Defining Eternal Life and the New Earth

At the end of the millennium, God will create a new heaven and a new earth, the eternal home for the redeemed. Eternal life is a gift from God, and to know Him and Jesus Christ is to possess it. In this restored creation, the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven, and God will dwell directly with humanity. There will be no more death, sorrow, or pain. Believers will have immortal, glorified bodies like the angels, and they will be like Christ, reigning with Him forever.

Comprehensive list of Supporting Verses: Genesis 2:9, Genesis 3:22-24, Genesis 7:9-15, Genesis 17:7-8, Exodus 17:5-6, Numbers 20:7-13, Deuteronomy 32:6, 1 Chronicles 29:10, Psalm 16:11, Psalm 21:4, Psalm 36:9, Psalm 37:11-29, Psalm 45:13, Psalm 48:1-3, Psalm 87:3, Psalm 104:4, Psalm 132:9-16, Psalm 133:3, Proverbs 4:9, Isaiah 11:6-9, Isaiah 12:3, Isaiah 25:8, Isaiah 30:19, Isaiah 35:10, Isaiah 52:1, Isaiah 55:1-3, Isaiah 56:5, Isaiah 60:20, Isaiah 61:3-10, Isaiah 65:17-25, Isaiah 66:22-24, Jeremiah 2:13, Jeremiah 3:19, Jeremiah 31:13-33, Jeremiah 32:38, Ezekiel 16:9-13, Ezekiel 34:15-25, Ezekiel 36:28, Hosea 1:10, Hosea 2:18, Hosea 13:14, Hosea 14:4, Joel 3:18, Daniel 2:35, Daniel 7:18-27, Daniel 10:5-6, Daniel 12:2-3, Zechariah 8:8, Zechariah 13:9, Matthew 5:3-12, Matthew 7:7, Matthew 11:5, Matthew 17:1-7, Matthew 19:29, Matthew 21:22, Matthew 22:1-14, Matthew 22:30-32, Matthew 24:37-47, Matthew 25:34-46, Mark 9:3, Mark 10:17, Mark 11:23-24, Mark 12:25, Mark 14:36, Mark 16:5, Luke 3:5, Luke 11:2-9, Luke 12:6-7, Luke 12:32, Luke 15:20-24, Luke 19:17, Luke 20:35-36, Luke 22:29-42, John 3:15, John 4:10-14, John 5:24-39, John 6:27-68, John 7:37-38, John 10:28-29, John 11:22, John 12:25, John 14:1-3, John 14:13-14, John 15:7-16, John 16:19-26, John 17:2-3, John 20:17, John 21:25, Acts 1:10, Acts 10:9-16, Acts 13:46-48, Romans 2:7, Romans 3:10-24, Romans 5:17-21, Romans 6:23, Romans 8:15-32, Romans 13:14, 1 Corinthians 2:9-12, 1 Corinthians 3:5-21, 1 Corinthians 9:25, 1 Corinthians 10:4, 1 Corinthians 15:26-58, 2 Corinthians 1:7, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, 2 Corinthians 6:18, Galatians 3:7-29, Galatians 4:5-26, Galatians 6:8, Ephesians 1:5-14, Ephesians 3:6-20, Ephesians 4:22-24, Philippians 3:21, 1 Timothy 4:8, 1 Timothy 6:12-19, 2 Timothy 1:1-10, 2 Timothy 2:5-12, 2 Timothy 4:8, Titus 1:2, Titus 3:7, Hebrews 1:14, Hebrews 2:14-15, Hebrews 6:12-17, Hebrews 8:10, Hebrews 11:8-16, Hebrews 12:22-23, Hebrews 13:14, James 1:5-12, James 2:5, James 5:16, 1 Peter 1:4, 1 Peter 3:7, 1 Peter 5:4, 2 Peter 3:13, 1 John 1:2, 1 John 2:25, 1 John 3:2-22, 1 John 5:4-20, Jude 1:21, Revelation 1:6, Revelation 2:7-10, Revelation 3:4-18, Revelation 4:4, Revelation 5:10, Revelation 6:11, Revelation 7:9-17, Revelation 10:1, Revelation 18:1, Revelation 19:8, Revelation 20:14, Revelation 21:1-7, Revelation 21:10-25, Revelation 22:1-17.

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<https://amazon.com/author/davidcurtismr>

Revelation 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

God's Plan of Salvation: A Comprehensive Topical Bible Study Dismantling Calvinism

Article One: The Gospel Genesis 3:15, Psalm 2:1-12, Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 18:32, Luke 19:10, Luke 24:45-49, John 1:1-18, John 3:16, Romans 1:1-6, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:34, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Galatians 4:4-7, Colossians 1:21-23, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, Hebrews 1:1-3, Hebrews 4:14-16, 2 Peter 3:9

Article Two: The Sinfulness of Man Genesis 3:15-24, Genesis 6:5, Deuteronomy 1:39, Isaiah 6:5, Isaiah 7:15-16, Isaiah 53:6, Jeremiah 17:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Jeremiah 31:29-30, Ezekiel 18:19-20, Matthew 7:21-23, Romans 1:18-32, Romans 3:9-18, Romans 5:12, Romans 6:23, Romans 7:9, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Hebrews 9:27-28, Revelation 20:11-15

Article Three: The Atonement of Christ Psalm 22:1-31, Isaiah 53:1-12, John 12:32, John 14:6, Acts 10:39-43, Acts 16:30-32, Romans 3:21-26, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:10-14, Philippians 2:5-11, Colossians 1:13-20, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, Hebrews 9:12-15, Hebrews 9:24-28, Hebrews 10:1-18, 1 John 1:7, 1 John 2:2

Article Four: The Grace of God Ezra 9:8, Proverbs 3:34, Zechariah 12:10, Matthew 19:16-30, Matthew 23:37, Luke 10:1-12, Acts 15:11, Acts 20:24, Romans 3:24, Romans 3:27-28, Romans 5:6, Romans 5:8, Romans 5:15-21, Galatians 1:6, Galatians 2:21, Galatians 5, Ephesians 2:8-10, Philippians 3:2-9, Colossians 2:13-17, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 9:28, 1 John 4:19

Article Five: The Regeneration of the Sinner Luke 15:24, John 3:3, John 7:37-39, John 10:10, John 16:7-14, Acts 2:37-39, Romans 6:4-11, Romans 10:14, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 6:15, Colossians 2:13, 1 Peter 3:18

Article Six: The Election to Salvation Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:6, Jeremiah 31:31-33, Matthew 24:31, Matthew 25:34, John 6:70, John 15:16, Romans 8:29-30, Romans 8:33, Romans 9:6-8, Romans 11:7, 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, Ephesians 1:4-6, Ephesians 2:11-22, Ephesians 3:1-11, Ephesians 4:4-13, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, 1 Peter 1:1-2, 1 Peter 2:9, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 7:9-10

Article Seven: The Sovereignty of God Genesis 1:1, Genesis 6:5-8, Genesis 18:16-33, Genesis 22, 2 Samuel 24:13-14, 1 Chronicles 29:10-20, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 23, Psalm 51:4, Psalm 139:1-6, Proverbs 15:3, Joel 2:32, John 6:44, Romans 11:3, Titus 3:3-7, Hebrews 11:6, Hebrews 12:28, James 1:13-15, 1 Peter 1:17

Article Eight: The Free Will of Man Genesis 1:26-28, Numbers 21:8-9, Deuteronomy 30:19, Joshua 24:15, 1 Samuel 8:1-22, 2 Samuel 24:13-14, Esther 3:12-14, Matthew 7:13-14, Matthew 11:20-24, Mark 10:17-22, Luke 9:23-24, Luke 13:34, Luke 15:17-20, Romans 10:9-10, Titus 2:12, Revelation 22:17

Article Nine: The Security of the Believer Matthew 7:23, John 10:28-29, John 14:1-4, John 16:12-14, Romans 3:21-26, Romans 8:29-30, Romans 8:35-39, Romans 12:1-3, 2 Corinthians 4:17, Ephesians 1:13-14, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 3:12, Colossians 1:21-22, 2 Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 13:5, James 1:12, 1 John 2:19, 1 John 3:2, 1 John 5:13-15, Jude 1:24-25

Article Ten: The Great Commission Psalm 51:13, Proverbs 11:30, Isaiah 52:7, Matthew 28:19-20, John 14:6, Acts 1:8, Acts 4:12, Acts 10:42-43, Romans 1:16, Romans 10:13-15, 1 Corinthians 1:17-21, Ephesians 3:7-9, Ephesians 6:19-20, Philippians 1:12-14, 1 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Timothy 2:5, 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Justification: Calvinism, Confessional Lutheranism, & Arminianism

Comparative Views on Justification

Matthew 7:13-14, John 3:16, John 10:14-15, John 10:28, Acts 2:21, Acts 17:30, 1 Timothy 2:4, 1 Timothy 2:6, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2

TULIP: Weighed and Found Wanting

Calvinism: Is Based on Cherry Picking or Incomplete Evidence

Genesis 6:5, Genesis 8:21, Deuteronomy 7:6-8, Psalm 14:1-3, Jeremiah 17:9, Malachi 3:6, Matthew 1:21, John 6:37, John 6:39, John 6:44-45, John 6:65, John 10:11, John 10:14-15, John 10:27-29, John 16:33, John 17:9, Acts 13:48, Acts 16:14, Acts 20:28, Romans 3:10-18, Romans 3:24, Romans 5:12, Romans 8:28-30, Romans 8:32-39, Romans 9:10-29, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 1 Corinthians 4:7, Ephesians 1:4-6, Ephesians 1:10-23, Ephesians 2:1-3, Ephesians 5:25, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, 2 Timothy 1:9, 2 Timothy 1:12, 2 Timothy 2:25, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 John 2:19

T - Total Depravity

Genesis 6:5, Psalm 14:1-3, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10-12, Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:1-3

U - Unconditional Election

Deuteronomy 7:6-8, John 6:37, John 6:44, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:28-30, Romans 9:11-16, Ephesians 1:4-5, 2 Timothy 1:9

L - Limited Atonement (or Particular Redemption)

Matthew 1:21, John 10:11, John 10:14-15, John 17:9, Acts 20:28, Romans 8:32-34, Ephesians 5:25

I - Irresistible Grace (or Effectual Calling)

John 6:37, John 6:45, Romans 8:30, Romans 9:16, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, Philippians 2:13, 2 Timothy 2:25

P - Perseverance of the Saints

John 6:39, John 10:27-29, Romans 8:35-39, Philippians 1:6, 2 Timothy 1:12, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 John 2:19

We must not judge a matter by the small handful of verses above; we must weigh it against the whole counsel of God.

When we place the system of TULIP on the scales of the King James Bible, it is found wanting. It cannot stand against the full testimony of the Scriptures. Do not take our word for it, and do not trust in the logic of men. Conduct your own study using the verses below. Put away your philosophy, stop leaning on your own understanding, and let the Bible speak.

The Book of Life—The Strong Foundation

Exodus 32:32, Psalm 69:28, Isaiah 4:3, Jeremiah 1:5, Daniel 12:1-3, Matthew 7:13-14, Matthew 10:30, Luke 10:20, Luke 22:32, John 5:24, Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 1:4-6, Philippians 4:3, 2 Timothy 1:1, 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 1:2, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:14, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 12:11, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, Revelation 20:7-8, Revelation 20:12, Revelation 20:15, Revelation 21:27, Revelation 22:19

The Election of God

Genesis 21:12, Deuteronomy 7:6, Nehemiah 9:7, Psalm 33:12, Psalm 65:4, Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 45:5, Isaiah 65:9, Haggai 2:23, Matthew 20:16, Mark 13:20, Luke 6:13, Luke 10:20, Luke 18:7, John 6:44, John 13:18, John 15:16, John 15:19, John 17:6, Acts 9:15, Acts 13:48, Acts 22:14, Romans 8:28-30, Romans 9:11-13, Romans 9:15-16, Romans 9:23, Romans 11:5, Romans 11:7, Romans 16:13, 1 Corinthians 1:27, Galatians 1:15, Ephesians 1:4-6, Ephesians 1:11, Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Timothy 5:21, 2 Timothy 2:4, Titus 1:1, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 1:4-5, 1 Peter 2:6, 1 Peter 5:13, 2 Peter 1:10, 2 John 1:13

Israel, the Jews: The Elect, "The Chosen" People

Genesis 12:2, Genesis 14:13, Genesis 17:10-11, Genesis 22:17, Genesis 35:22, Genesis 40:15, Genesis 49:28, Genesis 50:25, Exodus 2:11-12, Exodus 5:17, Exodus 9:7, Exodus 12:40-42, Exodus 19:4-6, Exodus 28:1, Exodus 32:9, Exodus 33:16, Leviticus 18:4, Leviticus 20:24, Numbers 10:36, Numbers 14:33, Numbers 18:6, Numbers 32:18, Deuteronomy 5:15, Deuteronomy 6:12, Deuteronomy 7:6-7, Deuteronomy 9:7, Deuteronomy 9:24, Deuteronomy 12:8-11, Deuteronomy 14:2, Deuteronomy 14:21, Deuteronomy 16:18, Deuteronomy 32:9,

Deuteronomy 32:15, Deuteronomy 33:29, Joshua 3:17, Joshua 5:6, Joshua 14:1-5, Judges 2:13, Judges 4:2, Judges 6:2, Judges 6:6, 1 Samuel 8:5, 1 Samuel 8:7, 1 Samuel 8:22, 1 Kings 8:53, 1 Kings 11:31, 1 Kings 12:19-20, 2 Kings 17:32, 2 Kings 18:11, 2 Kings 23:33, 2 Kings 24:16, 2 Kings 25:11, 1 Chronicles 16:13, Ezra 1:1-4, Psalm 48:3, Psalm 76:1, Psalm 96:5, Psalm 105:6, Psalm 115:3-4, Psalm 135:4, Psalm 137:6, Isaiah 2:8, Isaiah 27:12, Isaiah 41:8, Isaiah 45:4, Isaiah 51:2, Jeremiah 2:11-13, Jeremiah 7:25, Jeremiah 8:5, Jeremiah 13:9, Jeremiah 26:4, Jeremiah 33:26, Jeremiah 35:15, Jeremiah 44:4, Jeremiah 44:17, Ezekiel 20:18, Ezekiel 20:30, Ezekiel 38:17, Amos 1:1, Malachi 2:4-7, John 8:33, John 8:39, John 8:41, John 9:28-29, Acts 6:14, Acts 7:51, Acts 21:21, Acts 22:3, Romans 1:28, Romans 3:2, Romans 9:4-5, 2 Corinthians 11:22, 1 Thessalonians 4:5, Hebrews 9:1, Hebrews 9:8-11, Hebrews 10:1

The Gentiles: The Predestined Whom God Always Planned to Save

Leviticus 18:3, Leviticus 25:44, Deuteronomy 7:3, Deuteronomy 18:14, 1 Samuel 14:6, 2 Kings 17:7-8, 2 Chronicles 20:6, Nehemiah 5:9, Esther 9:1, Esther 9:5, Psalm 2:1, Psalm 2:8, Psalm 9:5, Psalm 9:20, Psalm 22:28, Psalm 33:10, Psalm 47:8, Psalm 79:1, Psalm 94:10, Isaiah 2:2, Isaiah 9:1, Isaiah 11:10, Isaiah 14:1, Isaiah 42:6, Isaiah 52:1, Isaiah 60:10, Jeremiah 2:11, Jeremiah 10:2, Lamentations 1:10, Matthew 10:5, Matthew 15:26, Luke 2:32, Luke 21:24, Luke 24:47, John 7:35, Acts 4:27, Acts 9:15, Acts 10:28, Acts 10:34-45, Acts 11:2-3, Acts 13:46, Acts 13:48-49, Acts 15:12, Acts 15:14, Acts 21:28-29, Romans 1:16, Romans 1:21, Romans 1:23, Romans 1:25, Romans 1:28-32, Romans 2:9, Romans 2:14, Romans 2:26, Romans 3:9, Romans 9:24, Romans 10:12, Romans 11:25, 1 Corinthians 12:2, Galatians 2:7-8, Galatians 3:8, Ephesians 2:11-12, Ephesians 2:14, Ephesians 4:19, 1 Thessalonians 4:5, Revelation 11:2

Romans 9: Israel (the Elect), Hardens Its Heart

Exodus 14:10, Exodus 32:9, Numbers 14:3, Numbers 14:11, Deuteronomy 9:7, Deuteronomy 9:24, Deuteronomy 32:15, Psalm 78:22, Isaiah 1:2, Isaiah 2:8, Isaiah 29:13, Isaiah 51:12, Isaiah 57:5, Isaiah 63:10, Isaiah 65:5, Jeremiah 2:11-13, Jeremiah 3:6-8, Jeremiah 6:13, Jeremiah 7:4, Jeremiah 8:5, Jeremiah 31:32, Ezekiel 16:59, Ezekiel 33:31, Micah 2:2, Matthew 3:9, Matthew 15:7-9, Matthew 23:31-33, Acts 7:9, Acts 7:27, Acts 7:35, Acts 7:39, Acts 7:51, Acts 13:27, Romans 2:5, Romans 4:9, Romans 4:22, Romans 9, Romans 10:3, 2 Corinthians 3:13-15, Philippians 3:7-9, Ephesians 4:30, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5

Romans 9 (Context): The Distinction Between Jews and Gentiles is No Longer Relevant

Romans 1:13, Romans 1:16, Romans 2:9-10, Romans 2:12-15, Romans 2:17-18, Romans 2:20, Romans 2:23-29, Romans 3:1, Romans 3:9, Romans 3:19-21, Romans 3:27-29, Romans 3:31, Romans 4:5, Romans 4:9, Romans 4:11-14, Romans 4:16, Romans 4:19-20, Romans 5:1-2, Romans 5:13, Romans 5:20, Romans 6:14, Romans 7:1-9, Romans 7:12, Romans 7:14, Romans 7:16, Romans 7:21-23, Romans 7:25, Romans 8:2-4, Romans 8:7, Romans 8:33, Romans 9:4, Romans 9:6, Romans 9:24-25, Romans 9:27, Romans 9:30-33, Romans 10:1, Romans 10:4-5, Romans 10:8-13, Romans 10:19, Romans 10:21, Romans 11:2, Romans 11:7, Romans 11:11-13, Romans 11:25-26, Romans 13:8-10, Romans 15:10-12, Romans 15:16, Romans 15:18, Romans 15:27, Romans 16:4

Romans 9-10 (Main Point): Whosoever Calls on the Name of the Lord

Genesis 22:18, Psalm 42:1-2, Psalm 63:1-2, Psalm 84:2, Psalm 107:9, Isaiah 45:21-22, Amos 8:11-13, Matthew 5:6, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 9:12, Matthew 10:14, Matthew 10:32, Matthew 10:42, Matthew 16:25, Matthew 18:4, Matthew 21:44, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 3:35, Mark 8:35, Mark 8:38, Mark 9:41, Luke 1:53, Luke 6:21, Luke 6:25, Luke 18:11-14, John 1:7, John 1:29, John 3:16-17, John 4:42, John 5:11, John 6:27, John 6:35, John 6:48, John 6:51, John 11:51-52, John 12:32, John 12:47, Acts 13:39, Romans 1:17, Romans 3:5, Romans 3:21-23, Romans 5:3-4, Romans 5:12, Romans 9:10, Romans 9:33, Romans 10:3-4, Romans 10:11-12, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Galatians 3:8-9, Galatians 3:16, Galatians 3:29, 1 Timothy 2:4, 1 Timothy 2:6, 1 Timothy 4:10, Hebrews 2:9, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:14, 1 John 5:19

Romans 11 (Conclusion): Gentiles, Grafted into Israel

Psalm 89:16, Isaiah 45:24-25, Isaiah 61:10, Matthew 6:33, Romans 4:5-6, Romans 4:11, Romans 4:24, Romans 9:30, Romans 11, 2 Corinthians 3:14-16, Philippians 3:9

Ephesians 1-2: The Wall Between Jews (the Elect) and Gentiles Broken Down

Exodus 23:32, Deuteronomy 7:2-3, Deuteronomy 12:29-31, Deuteronomy 18:9-14, Joshua 23:12, Judges 2:1-3, 1 Samuel 17:36, Jeremiah 2:18, Matthew 16:26-27, John 4:9, Acts 10:15, Acts 10:28, Acts 11:2-3, Acts 15:8-9, Ephesians 2:1

The Love of God

Deuteronomy 7:7-8, Deuteronomy 7:13, Deuteronomy 10:15, Deuteronomy 10:18, Deuteronomy 23:5, Job 7:17, Isaiah 38:17, Isaiah 43:3, Isaiah 49:15-16, Isaiah 63:9, Jeremiah 31:3, Hosea 11:4, Zephaniah 3:17, Malachi 1:2-3, John 3:16, John 15:9-10, John 16:27, John 17:23, John 17:26, Romans 5:5, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:39, 2 Corinthians 9:7, 2 Corinthians 13:11, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 2:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:16, Titus 3:4-7, Hebrews 12:6, 1 John 2:5, 1 John 3:1, 1 John 4:8-10, 1 John 4:12, 1 John 4:16, 1 John 4:19, Jude 1:21

The Grace of God

Psalm 45:2, Psalm 84:11, Proverbs 3:34, Zechariah 4:7, Zechariah 12:10, Luke 2:40, Luke 4:22, John 1:14, John 1:16-17, Acts 4:33, Acts 11:23, Acts 15:11, Acts 18:27, Acts 20:24, Acts 20:32, Romans 3:8, Romans 3:24, Romans 4:4, Romans 4:16, Romans 5:15, Romans 5:17, Romans 5:20-21, Romans 6:1, Romans 6:14-15, Romans 11:5-6, Romans 12:3, Romans 15:15, 1 Corinthians 1:4, 1 Corinthians 1:12, 1 Corinthians 3:10, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2 Corinthians 8:1, 2 Corinthians 9:8, 2 Corinthians 9:14, 2 Corinthians 12:9, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Galatians 1:15, Galatians 2:9, Galatians 5:4, Ephesians 1:6-7, Ephesians 2:5, Ephesians 2:7-8, Ephesians 3:7, Ephesians 4:29, Ephesians 6:24, Colossians 4:6, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 2 Timothy 2:1, Titus 3:7, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 10:29, Hebrews 12:15, Hebrews 12:28, Hebrews 13:9, James 1:17, James 4:6, 1 Peter 1:10, 1 Peter 1:13, 1 Peter 3:7, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 Peter 5:10, 2 Peter 3:18, 3 John 1:3-4, Jude 1:4

The Mercy of God

Exodus 34:6-7, Leviticus 16:30, Nehemiah 9:17, Job 25:4, Psalm 32:1, Psalm 51:1, Psalm 51:9-13, Psalm 65:3, Psalm 86:5, Psalm 86:15-16, Psalm 103:2-4, Psalm 103:7-8, Psalm 103:12, Psalm 130:3, Psalm 143:2, Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 33:24, Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 44:22, Isaiah 53:10-12, Isaiah 54:9-10, Isaiah 55:1-3, Isaiah 55:6-11, Jeremiah 31:34, Jeremiah 33:8, Jeremiah 50:20, Daniel 9:9, Jonah 4:2, Micah 7:18-19, Zechariah 13:1, Matthew 1:21, Luke 1:77, Luke 24:47, Acts 3:19, Acts 10:43, Acts 13:38-39, Romans 4:4-8, Romans 5:11, Romans 5:20, Romans 11:26-27, 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Ephesians 1:6-8, Ephesians 2:4-9, Colossians 1:14, Colossians 2:13-14, Philemon 1:18-19, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 8:12, Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 10:17, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 Peter 3:18, 1 John 1:7-9, 1 John 2:12, 1 John 4:7-8, Revelation 1:5, Revelation 7:14

The Sovereignty of God

Genesis 17:7-8, Psalm 4:3, Psalm 65:4, Psalm 69:23, Psalm 78:70-71, Psalm 106:4-5, Psalm 110:3, Psalm 115:14-15, Psalm 135:4, Proverbs 16:30, Isaiah 6:9-10, Isaiah 29:10-12, Isaiah 44:18, Jeremiah 32:39-40, Matthew 11:25-30, Matthew 13:15, Matthew 13:19, Matthew 22:14, Mark 4:15, Luke 6:13, Luke 8:12, Luke 19:42, John 6:37, John 6:44, John 6:65, John 6:70, John 10:28-29, John 12:46, John 13:11, John 13:18, John 15:16, John 17:12, Acts 2:39, Acts 2:47, Acts 3:25-26, Acts 9:15-16, Acts 13:46-48, Romans 8:29-30, Romans 11:5-7, Ephesians 1:3-6, Ephesians 1:11-12, Ephesians 1:18, Ephesians 2:4-10, Ephesians 4:18, Philippians 1:29, Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, 2 Timothy 2:19, Titus 3:3-7, 1 John 2:11, 1 John 4:10, 1 John 4:19

The Counsels and Purposes of God

Deuteronomy 29:29, Psalm 33:11, Proverbs 19:21, Isaiah 5:19, Isaiah 14:24, Isaiah 14:27, Isaiah 25:1, Isaiah 28:29, Isaiah 40:13-14, Isaiah 46:11, Jeremiah 4:28, Jeremiah 32:19, Jeremiah 49:20, Jeremiah 50:45, Micah 4:12, Matthew 24:36, Luke 7:30, Acts 1:7, Acts 2:23, Acts 4:28, Acts 20:27, Romans 8:28, Romans 9:11, Ephesians 1:9-11, Ephesians 3:11, 2 Timothy 1:9, Hebrews 6:17

The Foreknowledge of God

Deuteronomy 10:17, Deuteronomy 16:19, 2 Chronicles 19:7, Job 34:19, Proverbs 24:23-24, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 22:16, Luke 20:21, Acts 10:34, Romans 4:17, Romans 8:29-30, Galatians 2:6, Galatians 6:7-8, Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25, James 2:1-13, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 1:17

The Will of Man, Freely Applied in Prayer

Genesis 12:8, Genesis 28:20, Genesis 32:26, Exodus 32:11, 1 Samuel 1:15, 1 Kings 8:33, 2 Chronicles 7:14, 2 Chronicles 30:27, 2 Chronicles 32:20, 2 Chronicles 33:12, Nehemiah 1:6, Job 8:5, Job 11:13, Psalm 5:2-3, Psalm 10:17, Psalm 17:1, Psalm 25:1, Psalm 27:7-8, Psalm 34:6,

Psalms 42:4, Psalm 55:1, Psalm 56:9, Psalm 61:1, Psalm 62:8, Psalm 65:2, Psalm 73:28, Psalm 80:18, Psalm 86:7, Psalm 99:6, Psalm 102:2, Psalm 108:6, Psalm 116:4, Psalm 119:58, Psalm 119:145, Psalm 143:1, Psalm 145:18, Proverbs 15:8, Proverbs 30:8, Ecclesiastes 5:2, Isaiah 55:6, Isaiah 58:9, Jeremiah 29:13, Jeremiah 36:7, Lamentations 3:41, Zechariah 12:10, Matthew 4:10, Matthew 6:5, Matthew 6:7, Matthew 6:9-13, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:7-11, Matthew 21:22, Luke 11:8, Luke 18:1-7, Luke 22:42, Luke 23:42, John 4:22-24, John 14:13, John 15:16, John 16:23-24, Acts 7:59, Acts 9:11, Acts 22:16, Romans 8:15, Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 14:15, Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 2:18, Ephesians 3:14, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 3:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 2 Thessalonians 3:5, 1 Timothy 2:8, 1 Timothy 5:5, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 10:19, Hebrews 10:22, James 1:6, James 5:16-17, 1 John 5:14, Jude 1:20, Revelation 5:8

The Conscience

Genesis 42:21, 2 Samuel 24:10, Job 27:6, Proverbs 20:27, Matthew 27:3, Acts 2:37, Acts 23:1, Acts 24:16, Acts 26:9, Romans 2:15, Romans 9:1, Romans 13:5, Romans 14:21-22, 1 Corinthians 10:28-32, 2 Corinthians 1:12, 2 Corinthians 4:2, 2 Corinthians 5:11, 1 Timothy 1:19, 1 Timothy 3:9, 1 Timothy 4:2, Titus 1:15, Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 10:1-14, Hebrews 10:22, Hebrews 13:18, 1 Peter 2:19, 1 Peter 3:16, 1 Peter 3:21, 1 John 3:20-21

Humility

Matthew 23:8-10, Luke 14:8, Luke 14:10, Luke 17:10, Romans 12:3, Romans 12:10, Romans 12:16, 1 Corinthians 3:21, 1 Corinthians 10:12, 2 Corinthians 10:17, Galatians 5:26, Ephesians 4:17, Philippians 2:3, Philippians 2:5-8, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:5-6

Christian Liberty

Leviticus 25:10-17, Psalm 116:16-17, Psalm 119:45, Isaiah 42:7, Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18, John 8:32, John 8:34, John 8:36, Acts 26:12-20, Romans 6:7, Romans 6:18, Romans 6:20, Romans 7:6, Romans 8:2, Romans 8:15, Romans 8:21, 1 Corinthians 7:22, 1 Corinthians 8:9, 1 Corinthians 9:19, 1 Corinthians 10:29, 1 Corinthians 10:32, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 2:4-5, Galatians 3:13, Galatians 4:3-5, Galatians 4:22-26, Galatians 4:31, Galatians 5:1, Galatians 5:13, Colossians 1:13, Colossians 2:20, Hebrews 2:15, James 1:25, James 2:12, 1 Peter 2:16, 2 Peter 2:19, Jude 1:4

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Revelation 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, **a great multitude, which no man could number**, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

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